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CORRESPONDENCE

'Liberals & Catholics'

Washington, D.C.

To the Editors: I agree with your editorial [November 18, 1994] that we need to give a fair account of liberalism's virtues. But, as *Commonweal*'s editors recognize, this is hardly an uncomplicated matter. The achievements of liberalism are linked with presuppositions that have led (also) to the problems associated with consumerism and individualism. In our rightful concern to praise liberalism's achievements, therefore, we need to be careful not to arrive too late with our criticisms.

1. Michael Buckley's book, *The Origins of Modern Atheism*, may offer a pertinent lesson here. Buckley points out that Christians in the modern period, while developing arguments in defense of theism, often employed the rationalistic patterns of thought that had undermined claims of a genuine theism in the first place. Christians, in other words, bracketed what is specifically Christian in their evidence and experience, adding these only after some of the crucial assumptions of their opponents had already (however unwittingly) been imported into their own arguments. The result was what Buckley calls the Christian contribution to atheism.

2. Again, as Wolfhart Pannenberg puts it in a recent lecture, "[t]he further secularism advances the more urgent it is that Christian faith and Christian life be seen in sharp contrast to the secularist culture....What is needed is a strong reaffirmation of the central articles of Christian faith against the spirit of secularism, and then a joining of that to a renewed commitment to rationality and ecumenical openness."

This, then, was the burden of the statement ["A Civilization of Love: The Pope's Call to the West"] and my commentary thereon that your editorial addressed: Not that we should not acknowledge liberal virtues, but that we can assess these properly only as we first become clear about the founding presuppositions of both liberalism and Catholicism. We must take care to identify correctly the nature and source of "liberalism's current troubles," if we are to appropriate liberalism's achievements in a way that will not in the end serve mainly to collude in extending its flaws.

Does this insistence that the times call for us to be radical (i.e., "to go to the roots") indicate an "integralist rhetoric"? I think not, of course. But the statement is only a beginning; it tries only, with Pope John Paul II and the Second Vatican Council, to (re-)center our thinking on the requirements of the universal call to holiness and thus of the *sequela Christi*; and invites others to assist in discerning the concrete implications of this call for our civilization in this critical (post-1989) period of cultural transition.

As you recognize, a hefty issue, too hefty to tackle in a single statement or commentary. We look forward to your help in responding to it. DAVID L. SCHINDLER

The writer is editor of Communio *(North American edition) and Gagnon Professor of Fundamental Theology at the John Paul II Institute.*

The horror!

Somewhere in Spain, still

To the Editors: Regarding the confession of faith I exacted from Hillary Rodham Clinton, mentioned by Margaret O'Brien Steinfels in your issue of December 2, 1994: Actually, it wasn't the thumbscrews that finally did it but the threat of canceling Ms. Clinton's subscription to *Newsweek*. TOMÁS de TORQUEMADA

Don't belittle Hillary

Hobart, N.Y.

To the Editors: Re: "A New Role for Hillary," by Margaret O'Brien Steinfels [December 2, 1994]: A woman who totally wowed Congress with an unprecedented analysis of the American health-care "system," after an arduous research effort, should not be relegated to a "wifely" shade stuck in the lotus position.

Until the reality of the health-care crisis is grasped, another conversation on abortion is a bit frilly. Many hospitals are now dangerous places as greedy administrators attempt to replace professionals with marginally educated "caregivers." Until there is universal, properly financed health-care coverage, this trend will only intensify. Mrs. Clinton has done much to make this clear. As for the preachments of John Wesley, I suspect Mrs. Clinton not only knows them but has gone about putting them to use, and will not cease.

I have been reading *Commonweal*, with lapses, since age sixteen (I'm now sixty-four). I've sat in a room with George Shuster, Jacques Maritain, and others discussing matters of real substance. It's upsetting to me to see such a silly piece of writing in your pages. Surely there are more significant issues to be addressed.

ELIZABETH ORTON

The media & Fr. Trosch

Chicago, Ill.

To the Editors: I beg to differ with Archbishop Oscar Lipscomb's questioning the media attention given to Father David

(Continued on page 29)

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COMMONWEAL

CONTENTS

Volume CXXII, Number 1

Correspondence: 2
Editorial: 3
Shifting allegiance: *William B. Prendergast* 4
Ties that bind (& knot): *Francis J. Buckley* 6
Shared treasure: *Frederick R. McManus* 7
Cockroaches aren't God: *Sidney Callahan* 8
Doubling the wager: *John Garvey* 11
When a Christian chants the Qur'an: *George Dardess* 11
Poetry: *William Pitt Root* 13
Media: *Frank McConnell* 16
Stage: *Marian Burkhart* 18

BOOKS

Crossing the Threshold of Hope, by Pope John Paul II: *Peter Steinfels* 21
Race and Culture, by Thomas Sowell: *Don Wycliff* 22
Religious booknotes: *Lawrence S. Cunningham* 25
Taking umbrage: *Katharine Byrne* 30

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Reform or resentment?

Radical changes in social policy are promised by the new Congress. No doubt, some changes are needed. But as Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.) and Robert Dole (R-Kans.) begin their remaking-government spree, will they be able to distinguish between reform and resentment? Two groups—immigrants and children—are particularly vulnerable to the politics of resentment. Immigrants and children are uniquely without elected representation. Nor are there lobbyists or special interest groups with the clout to resist legislation that in the case of immigrants may be largely xenophobic and in the case of poor children mostly punitive.

Immigration: California voters in a fit of pique voted yes to Proposition 187. One of its goals was to cut educational and medical services to illegal immigrants, the costs of which are now borne by California taxpayers. Six other states, including Florida and Texas, have sued the federal government for reimbursement, arguing that such expenditures stem from its failure to enforce immigration laws. A federal district court has denied Florida's claim.

If Proposition 187 passes constitutional muster, proponents say it will discourage undocumented migrants from crossing the Mexican border. If, as expected, 187 does not meet the constitutional test, still the voters and the suits against Washington will have made a point. The federal government should enforce the current immigration laws: Provide more immigration officers and border guards, clean up the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization and make it more effective, force the courts to act expeditiously in deportation hearings.

But enforcing the current immigration laws means not only rigorously patrolling the U.S.-Mexican border but also tracking down and deporting visitors from all over the world who overstay their visas. After all, it is not only Mexicans who illegally immigrate, but Irish, English, Eastern Europeans, Pakistanis, Indians, Koreans, and Chinese as well. In fact, people who want to come here and have the money, can and do buy airplane tickets, arrive legally as students or tourists, and disappear into the underground U.S. economy when their visas run out.

The most effective deterrent to illegal immigration would be to keep such immigrants from working, no matter where they come from or how they got here: First, mandate a counterfeit-proof, computer-connected national identity card for all Americans and require it for employment and government services; second, enforce the current laws against employers who hire illegals by levying maximum fines and imposing maximum jail sentences.

Sound Draconian? Yes.

Is it workable? Probably not totally.

Why? Consider the nation's conflicted views and history.

- Most Americans are unwilling to become the kind of country that closes its bor-

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ders to newcomers. We are, most of us, relative newcomers ourselves and nativist claims sound hollow in our ears. Add to this our religious traditions, which, varied though they are, urge us to welcome the stranger.

- Most Americans, right, left, and center, are unwilling to carry national identity cards.
- Most Americans also understand that some parts of our economy depend on eager, hard-working laborers, skilled and unskilled, who will put in long hours for relatively modest pay.
- And face it: Every member of Congress has constituents of some ethnic group or other who will demand, and receive, special treatment for their own "illegals."

Barriers to effective enforcement of the law do not abrogate the law. But even marginally stricter enforcement could help stave off more drastic restrictions. It would discourage illegal migration by increasing the "opportunity costs," while assuring those waiting to come legally that an orderly queue is being maintained. Such enforcment, above all, could help to assuage the sense of resentment that has given rise to mean-spirited measures like Proposition 187.

Something of the same resentment and mean-spiritedness seem to underlie plans to send poor children to orphanages. It may be as Abigail McCarthy has argued in these pages ("Orphans Need Homes," January 26, 1990), that some children would benefit from the security and discipline of an orphanage. But Mr. Gingrich seems to have more than this in mind.

Even if the whole country sat down to watch Spencer Tracy in *Boys Town*, Gingrich's idea could hardly stand the scrutiny of the most casual viewer. Leave aside the cost for care: $40-$45,000 per child, per year. Forget the costs of building. Leave aside the current laws and social welfare regulations. Simply ask: Who will care for the children? Spencer Tracy as Father Flanagan is emblematic. The great orphanages of yesteryear were run by nuns and priests—or by their Protestant and Jewish equivalents—and dedicated to the long-term, time-consuming, twenty-four-hour-a-day job of raising children. Those saintly women and men have few successors. That leaves civil servants—a group the Republicans are otherwise eager to cast from the temple of government.

The many thousands of unmarried teen-age mothers do constitute a problem for the country. Making their children "orphans" by governmental fiat will not solve the problem, just as entertaining a nativist politics will not solve the problems of aggrieved California taxpayers.

ET CETERA

MY DINNER WITH KAROL "A month ago, I was invited to a small luncheon with the pope but arrived in Rome a few hours too late," Michael Novak explained in his review of Pope John Paul II's *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* (*The Wall Street Journal*, October 27, 1994). "My experience in reading these pages was as if I were making up for what I missed...."

The late Peter Hebblethwaite, in his review (*Times Literary Supplement*, November 11, 1994), backed up his comparison of the pope to an elderly professor: "I once heard him discussing whether Portuguese had a word for 'nostalgia.'"

Unlike Novak, Richard John Neuhaus got to the Vatican on time. "I read the book," he reported (*National Review*, December 5, 1994), "within a few days of a long and lively dinner with the pope." Father Neuhaus confesses that this is "heavy-duty name-dropping"—but then someone's got to do it.

Our reviewer (*see* page 21) insists that in the line of his journalistic duties he has been within a few yards of John Paul on at least two occasions but no words were exchanged. "When he did address me," our reviewer adds, "it seems he was also talking to a few hundred thousand other people present as well.

"Of course, the pope often phones late at night just to chat."

A RENAISSANCE WOMAN *Commonweal*'s poetry editor, Rosemary Deen, can usually be spotted during her bi-weekly visits behind a large stack of thin envelopes, sorting through the doggerel, verse, haikus, and everything that passes for poetry, including the wonderful poems she chooses for these pages. She is also co-author with Mariet Ponsot of two books on writing: *Beat Not the Poor Desk* and *The Common Sense* (Boynton/Cook/Heinemann). And then, she teaches English at Queens College where she is associate professor. Of course, she writes poetry herself—and essays. A group of these on "Gardening" (*Antioch Review*, Fall 1993) are among the "Notable Essays of 1993," recently so designated in *The Best American Essays, 1994* (Houghton Mifflin). Readers will remember her evocation of "green" in *Commonweal*'s pages (June 17, 1994), just as the editors remember her annual performance as Lady Bountiful in bringing us a lunch from her garden. And the mother of five. And wife of Leonard Deen. Wow!

ELECTION '94

SHIFTING ALLEGIANCE

'ROMANS' & 'REBELS' GO REPUBLICAN

In 1884 a delegation of Protestant ministers gathered in New York City in a show of support for the Republican presidential nominee, James G. Blaine. In one of the notable campaign gaffes of American politics, the group's spokesman, the Reverend Samuel Burchard, warmed up the partisan assembly by denouncing the Democrats as the party of "Rum, Romanism, and Rebellion."

This remark infuriated enough Catholic voters to give Grover Cleveland a winning margin of 1,100 in New York, sending him to the White House. In an election postmortem, Republican Blaine himself said, "I should have carried New York by 10,000 if the weather had been clear on election day and Mr. Burchard had been doing missionary work in Asia Minor or Cochin China."

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In fact, Burchard's remark may have been indiscreet, but it was not inaccurate. The South, the Catholics, and the saloons (in New York, at least) were bulwarks of the Democratic party in 1884 and long thereafter.

But no longer.

Mr. Burchard would have been astonished at the election of 1994 and the composition of the next Congress. The Romans (Catholics) and the Rebels (Southerners) will constitute half of its Republican membership. (Though the purveyors of rum are currently concerned with avoiding added sin taxes, we have no idea how they fared.) 1994 signals a revolutionary shift in the base of support for the two parties; groups that were once overwhelmingly Democrat are deserting in droves and changing the composition of the Republican party.

That Republicanism is spreading through the South like kudzu is not news. No Democratic presidential candidate has gained a majority of the Southern vote since 1976, when Jimmy Carter won; none has had a majority of white Southerners since 1964, when Lyndon Johnson was elected. Now Southern voters, who expressed their dissatisfaction with national Democrats by voting for the Republican presidential candidate, have turned to Republicans for Congress as well as state and local offices. As Democratic incumbents retire, this Republican tide can be expected to roll on through the South.

In 1994, eleven states once part of the Confederacy elected sixty-four Republicans and sixty-one Democrats to the House. Five of the six senatorial contests in these states were won by Republicans, and with the switch in party affiliation of Senator Richard Shelby of Alabama, this adds up to thirteen Republican and nine Democratic Southern senators in the new Congress. Governors of six of these eleven states will be Republicans. Things have changed even in New York, Burchard's home state: Of fourteen Republicans elected to represent the state in the House, ten are Catholics (there are seven Catholics among New York's seventeen Democratic House members).

Not since 1946 when Republicans took 56 House seats from the Democrats to win control of the 80th Congress has there been an upheaval like that of 1994, though the geographical and religious mix of the 104th Congress will be quite different. In 1946 the South sent no Republicans to the Senate and only two to the House—less than 1 percent of the total Republican membership (246). This year, Southerners will constitute 28 percent of the Republican membership in the House and 25 percent in the Senate. The top Republicans in the House—the speaker, the majority leader, and majority whip—are all Southerners.

In the past thirty years, the base of Republican strength has shifted south and west. In the 90th Congress, which opened in 1967, two-thirds of Republican House members represented Eastern and Midwestern states; today only 45 percent do. In 1967, 12 percent of House Republicans came from the eleven states of the old Confederacy; today that percentage has more than doubled. Throw in Kentucky and Oklahoma and the region's share of Republican House seats approaches one-third of the total; in combination with the Western states, they constitute a clear majority of Republican House members.

Nor is the Republican congressional membership any longer overwhelmingly Protestant. Catholic Republicans have steadily increased over the last half-century, growing from 4 percent in the 80th Congress to the current 22 percent in the 104th.

REPUBLICAN CATHOLIC MEMBERSHIP IN CONGRESS

	80th Cong. (1947–48)	86th Cong. (1959–60)	90th Cong. (1967–68)	104th Cong. (1995–96)
Senate	1	0	2	9
House	13	14	22	54

As they long have on the Democratic side of the aisle, Catholic Republicans will substantially outnumber the adherents of any other single religious group in the new House. Among Republican senators, nine Catholics run a close second to ten Episcopalians.

The serious erosion of Catholic support for the Democrats has been discernible at least since 1972 when McGovernites took control of the party. Jimmy Carter, in the post-Watergate election of 1976, was the last Democratic presidential candidate to receive a majority of the Catholic vote. This trend is not found among black Catholics, who remain as strongly attached to the Democratic party as do other African-Americans. Except for Cuban-Americans, Hispanics still give the Democrats a comfortable margin of the vote, about two to one.

Among "white" Catholics, however, most polls show either an equal split between the parties or a Republican advantage. A 1994 *Times-Mirror* poll reported that 47 percent of the white Catholic population regards itself as Republican or leaning Republican and 46 percent are Democratic or leaning Democratic. A 1990 survey of religious identity by City University of New York found that 34 percent of non-Hispanic white Catholics were Republican and 29 percent Democratic. These latter findings are consistent with a *Times-Mirror* poll on the 1994 congressional race: nationwide 54 percent of white Catholics voted for Republican House candidates.

In New York City, where Catholics once voted the straight Democratic ticket by margins of two-to-one, the 1993 mayoral election pointed in the direction of mass abandonment. Rudolph Giuliani received 86 percent of the white Catholic vote; David

"Being a young Republican isn't all it's cracked up to be."

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Dinkins, 12 percent. In the same year, the Republican candidate for mayor of Los Angeles, Richard Riordan, was the choice of 78 percent of white Catholics; the Democrat, Michael Woo, polled 22 percent. Examples abound in 1994 gubernatorial races: for one, in a three-way race, George Patacki of New York received 52 percent of the vote cast by Catholics, 10 percentage points more than Mario Cuomo.

The Democrats are in danger of losing permanently important parts of a coalition that often carried them to victory. But Republicans would be wrong to assume that recently acquired supporters—particularly Catholics with a large percentage of swing voters—are permanently committed. It is doubtful that Ross Perot's 20-percent share of the Catholic vote in 1992 has become strongly anchored to the Republican party.

One hundred years ago the voters replaced a Democratic majority in Congress by Republicans in a tidal wave. The election of 1894 was the prelude to an era of Republican dominance in American politics. Whether the election of 1994 is a harbinger of the same remains to be seen. Much will depend on the performance of the 104th Congress. WILLIAM B. PRENDERGAST

William B. Prendergast is completing a book, Catholics and the Republican Party.

REPORT ON ECUMENISM–I

TIES THAT BIND (& KNOT)

THIRTY YEARS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Ecumenism has arrived at a new stage, unforeseen thirty years ago. Catholics have reached agreement in virtually all essential areas of doctrine with the Orthodox, but the two are stalemated about various bureaucratic disciplines. In fact, following the disintegration of the Iron Curtain, ecumenical relations may have taken a turn for the worse. The Orthodox resent and resist attempts by Catholics to regain churches and monasteries that were confiscated by the Soviets. In much of Eastern Europe, they proselytize Catholics and other Christians but are critical of efforts by Catholics and others to evangelize or even catechize members of non-Orthodox churches.

With the mainline Protestant churches, Catholics have achieved basic agreement in faith, but a radical disagreement exists about morals and discipline: abortion, women's ordination, birth control. Even the area of agreement, however, is complicated by the erosion of the faith among Christians because of classic liberalism and the individualism springing from the Enlightenment. Whereas mainline Protestant churches do not proselytize, they readily welcome Catholics who have become disaffected with their own church's official teachings on morals and discipline.

With evangelicals, Catholics agree on morals and the essentials of the faith, but not on discipline or on institutional structures. Fundamentalists, sects, and cults, differ from Catholics in faith, morals, and discipline. Both fundamentalists and evangelicals actively proselytize marginal (that is, occasionally practicing) and dormant (that is, nonpracticing) Catholics. This may be healthy, if people are led closer to God and Christ; but it may also reflect fideism, individualism, and a rejection of the social responsibility espoused by Catholics and mainline Protestants.

New religions (for example, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, Sokka Gakkai Buddhism) regularly try to proselytize Christians, and exert economic, social, and religious pressure (for example, threats of hell to all nonmembers).

There are, of course, dramatic variations on these themes in different parts of the world, but they indicate that, when it comes to ecumenism, the Catholic church faces a radically different situation than it did following Vatican Council II. What attitudes should we adopt in dealing with these developments? What can we do?

First, we must try to reach agreement with others on the basic human right to religious freedom, so eloquently described in Vatican II's "Declaration on Religious Freedom." People should be free from all physical, psychological, sociological, economic, and political coercion when choosing and practicing their faith. Agreement with other religious groups will not be easy, for many groups survive not because of their inner strengths but because they prevent other groups from effectively proclaiming a different faith.

Second, ecumenism is best served when faith is understood as an assent to God's revelation as personally perceived, and when a church or religion is seen as a community of believers organized to help people perceive and respond to God's revelation in creed, code, and cult. Avery Dulles has pointed to three essential elements of faith: conviction, trust, and commitment, the latter linked to participation in the struggle to improve the world. Shifting away from an "objective truth" approach toward the personal and communal elements of trust and commitment, feeling and choice, opens up lines of communication which may be more ecumenically fruitful.

Third, rather than raid one another's membership, Christian churches should try to help one another in the task of renewal, reform, and evangelization. But if a church resists reform or neglects evangelization, we may not put the security of a church above the spiritual well-being of persons. In terms of the spiritual life, it is better for someone to be fervently responding to God's revelation than to be a merely marginal or dormant adherent of some religious group.

Both nominal (dormant) and marginalized Catholics need evangelization. They have been affected by "Catholic culture" but have not made it their own. Both groups need to hear the good news proclaimed in such a way that it brings about an "encounter with Christ, conversion of heart, and experience of the Spirit in the community of the church," as the 1977 Roman synod put it. But it is best that such Catholics be evangelized by the Catholic church. Thus Pope John Paul II's call for a new evangelization. Catholics must work with other churches toward renewal, but if large numbers of our own household are not being effective-

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ly reached by Catholic evangelization, then these individuals' growth in the spiritual life takes precedence over membership in Roman Catholicism. Let the other Christian churches serve their spiritual needs. I rejoice at the evangelistic efforts of Billy Graham. He encourages all who make a commitment to Christ to become active in their own churches, but he puts commitment to Jesus ahead of denominational adherence.

What of the fundamentalist churches? Their membership is steadily growing, often among those who are afraid of cultural trends, feel marginalized, and prefer to hand over responsibility to others. This is a cognitive problem, but it has affective overtones. Fundamentalists appeal to the emotions; their devotion to Jesus is strong and sincere; they form small communities which offer support and fellowship. Yet their understanding and presentation of the gospel is often so distorted and even truncated that while their initial evangelization may be fruitful, subsequent catechesis and growth in the faith can be hampered. The individualism reinforced by some fundamentalists can deafen them to the social gospel and its call to corporate responsibility for sinful economic, political, and social structures. Can we legitimately encourage anyone to join them? If so, under what circumstances? We can and should encourage people to say yes to God, confident that all "elements of holiness and truth possess an inner dynamism toward Catholic unity," as Vatican II taught. In this regard, the church counsels us to be generous and patient. The journey to full union with God may have many windings.

The "new" religions pose a more serious problem. Vatican II recognized that other religious traditions may be vehicles of God's revelation and called upon Christians to recognize, preserve, and promote the spiritual and moral goods contained in them. But can we legitimately encourage any Christian, even the dormant or marginalized Christian, to leave Christianity for another religion? (Historically, we have seen what happens. Many Christians joined Islam for economic or political reasons. It has been virtually impossible to reconvert their descendants.)

Once again, Christians should encourage everyone to follow God's will as he or she perceives it. But we must also proclaim, in season and out, that Jesus is the full revelation of God. Instead of simply discouraging people from joining other religions, we must make Christianity attractive by letting the Spirit of Jesus radiate through our own lives.

People should be Christians because they want to be. Too many adults, teen-agers, and ethnic groups have heard the message but have not found it to be good news. The church is not meeting their needs for identity, for a healthy self-concept, for a religious experience which transforms their lives, or for a community where they feel at home, supported, and spiritually challenged. The affective aspect of catechesis has been neglected.

In summary, we live and pray and work in a very diverse, complicated world. We Catholics are competing for members with other Christian churches and the new religions. We must respect the revelation found in all of them yet remain confident that Jesus alone is the completion of creation and the one mediator for the salvation of the whole human race. Our efforts to evangelize must be made with full awareness that the most important goal is not to boost Catholic statistics but to draw all people into loving union with God in Christ.

FRANCIS J. BUCKLEY

Francis J. Buckley, S.J., teaches theology at the University of San Francisco.

REPORT ON ECUMENISM–II

SHARED TREASURE

THE INCLUSIVE LECTIONARY

No one should denigrate the great ecumenical moments: The pope of Rome meets with the archbishop of Canterbury or with the ecumenical patriarch of Constantinople. Statements of doctrinal convergence are issued by joint commissions for dialogue. But there are other moments of quieter ecumenism, concrete and pastoral—of regular occurrence and lasting importance.

One of these is the common use of the same schedule of biblical readings at the Sunday liturgy in neighboring congregations, Catholic, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, and on and on. This common pattern for hearing the word of God is embodied in a common lectionary, now called *The Revised Common Lectionary* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1992). It is a list that is equally usable with the excellent *New Revised Standard Version*, the *New American Bible*, or older versions. The remarkable thing is that this agreed-upon list of readings—now spreading throughout the English-speaking world and under study by the churches of other languages—is basically the order established for the reformed Roman liturgy in 1969.

Among many instances of reciprocal influence in liturgical reform, this is a providential contribution of Vatican II. The council decreed that more scriptural readings should be introduced into the services of worship, whether sacraments or other services, even the briefest. But for the Sunday Eucharist, its chief concern, the council mandated "a more lavish opening up of the treasures of the Bible," with a better selection of passages read over a period of years.

It is hard to exaggerate the impact upon the hundreds of millions of Catholics who follow the Roman rite. The 1969 reform increased the quantity and quality of readings, and the use of a three-year cycle of readings gave it a distinctive character. Based on semicontinuous reading of Matthew, Mark, and, Luke—with John added to the year of Mark—the three-year list enables the Scriptures to be heard as written, without the artifices of scholastic, analytic, or even catechetical arrangements.

The revised Roman order was barely published when other churches in North America began to adopt the same arrangement, with certain refinements and adaptations (for example, changes dependent on different church calendars and traditions). The first launched was *The Worshipbook-Services* of the

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Presbyterian Church in 1970 (later accepted by the Disciples of Christ and the United Church of Christ), followed by Episcopal, Lutheran, and Consultation on Church Union lectionaries. These culminated in a joint effort—involving the collaboration of ICEL, the (Roman Catholic) International Commission on English in the Liturgy—toward a single joint list for trial use in 1983; this was reworked for the 1992 edition mentioned above. The project was sponsored by the (North American) Consultation on Common Texts; it is now promoted by the (international) English Language Liturgical Consultation.

Just hearing and celebrating the same readings with our Christian sisters and brothers every Sunday is a remarkable achievement. But there is more. The common undertaking also involves joint study groups, shared homily preparation by preachers, the same commentaries used in several churches, and even the use of the lectionary for religious education curricula. This is concrete, living ecumenism.

While the *Common Lectionary* is an adaptation closely based on the reformed Roman liturgical order, it is also a refinement. It smooths out rough edges and supplies omitted verses in readings; it adds otherwise neglected readings that speak of the women of the Bible. In particular, the ecumenical list offers sets of alternative Old Testament readings for the Sundays of so-called ordinary time. One alternative set contains a richer, semicontinuous selection from the Old Testament, including important narrative passages not heard on Sundays in the Catholic community. The Roman list is also provided as an option, a list that has been criticized for somewhat artificial or even far-fetched pairings of Old Testament and Gospel readings. That problem was noted by the Pontifical Biblical Commission in 1993, even as it praised the Roman lectionary and its wide ecumenical impact.

Ironically, the *Common Lectionary* as such has not yet been authorized in the Catholic community, although the National Conference of Catholic Bishops asked to experiment with it in the mid-1980s. Now, with the encouragement of the Roman Council for Promoting Christian Unity (in the 1993 ecumenical directory) and the Biblical Commission, there is greater hope that there may be ecumenical identity in the choice of Sunday readings if not translations. Despite recent controversies over those translations (*see*, Gabe Huck, "Rome Speaks" *Commonweal*, November 18, 1994), the wisdom of Vatican II in matters liturgical and ecumenical is clearly felt in the use of the basic Roman lectionary by so many churches. That we, Catholics and other Christians alike, can today hear God's word in a liturgical pattern that is substantially the same is a clear blessing for pastoral ecumenical activity. It is quiet ecumenism.

FREDERICK R. MCMANUS

Monsignor Frederick R. McManus is professor emeritus of canon law at The Catholic University of America.

OF SEVERAL MINDS Sidney Callahan

COCKROACHES AREN'T GOD

PUTTING THE 'EN' IN PANTHEISM

"I object to calling the universe 'God's body'; isn't this simply pantheism?" I was in the midst of another debate with a circle of women friends over ecofeminism, or the new fusion of feminism and ecology. "No, no," I am told. "This is not pantheism but panentheism."

"What! What's that?"

Panentheism, I have now learned, after looking it up at least ten times, is "the doctrine that God includes the world as part, though not the whole, of God's being."

Even after this distinction is explained to me, I am not convinced. The argument goes on. Whatever you may have read in Deborah Tannen's books about gendered speech (or "genderlect"), it's not true that women won't disagree with one other or engage in intellectual dispute. Content matters; all talk is not building relationships.

Feminists for sure understand that an erroneous belief such as "women are innately inferior" can ruin lives and corrupt cultures. I'll grant that most women are nicer than most men when they disagree with you, but women can still go at it with vigor and rigor.

In our ongoing conflict my ecofeminist friends keep asserting God's immanence in Creation, capital C, using images of Creation as God's body. I, in turn, object by bringing up viruses, plagues, genetic disease, brain tumors, breast cancer, tornadoes, cockroaches, lice, etc. (And this list leaves out the failings of the human creature.) My point is not to deny that God made the world and that it is good, or to disavow that the Holy Spirit continues to create and sustain creation; but I do believe that creation, which is somehow wounded, should not be identified with God.

Saint Paul writes to the Romans that the whole creation is enslaved to decadence, and from the beginning "has been groaning in one great act of giving birth" (8:23). Paul concludes that we must be content to hope because "our salvation is not in sight." I agree. Within the universe we know, death, diseases, and chance events wreak havoc; yes, it's a beautiful, wondrous world that "is charged with the grandeur of God"; it's also flawed.

Aha, say my opponents, you're only disturbed because you put human welfare first, taking an arrogant anthropocentric point of view. Nature doesn't distinguish a cancer or other diseases because after all, these occurrences are neutral and just part of the ongoing ecological cycle. Gaia, or earth's ecological system, simply renews itself continually.

All right, I reply, I admit I'm a "speciesist" and put humankind first and foremost. This is partly because I am human, but even

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more because I believe the Scriptures that proclaim humankind to be made in the image of God.

Besides, if we as humans don't believe in our specialness, how are we going to take up responsibility or plan to cooperate with the rest of our fellow creatures to preserve the world? Surely only *homo sapiens* has the capacity to worry about future generations or to make necessary interventions. Snail darters and spotted owls can't do much about saving the whales, or vice versa.

When ecological enthusiasts, especially those called "deep ecologists," assert that all of life and natural processes are equal, they're basically disparaging the importance of human life. This egalitarian approach to natural processes seems like a form of mystification to me, if not fatalism. Please don't expect me to believe that infectious lethal viruses are value neutral, equal to human life, or a good part of God's plan for creation. Think of how the AIDS virus first knocks out the immune system and then proceeds to attack the brain and cause dementia.

And AIDS may not be the last plague we will have to fight against. In all future ecological debates I will cite the evidence presented in Richard Preston's *The Hot Zone* (Random House, 1994) and Laurie Garrett's *The Coming Plagues* (Farrar Straus and Giroux, 1994). The hot zone is a place in Africa where deadly diseases make the leap from animals to humans. These two books scientifically explain why and how new diseases will emerge and threaten human life. Medicine may have eradicated smallpox and polio but the natural environment is at the ready to produce new and more lethal assaults. Can this dark side of creation be seen as God's body?

For me an adequate story of creation has to include its nonidentification with the divine as well as affirm its flaws and basic goodness. Hope for the transfiguration of creation is sustained by faith in the Incarnation and redemption; God is for us, forever. Now we too are enabled to work—with, through, and in God—toward the final transformation of creation. But the struggle against disorder, evil, and inertia will continue.

I'm drawn to Paul's image of creation

"Hey, you're not my husband!"

groaning in one great act of giving birth. Maybe there are other images from childbirth that might help us in understanding creation. Perhaps creation can be seen as a child in the womb which is distinct from its mother yet intimately dependent upon maternal nurture. The nurturing placenta, also, encloses and nourishes the fetus by drawing upon the mother's resources, although it is not the mother, nor after birth is it any longer part of the child. Well, enough of this line of speculation. There's nothing like a bit of struggle with the hard questions of faith to make you understand past heresies that constantly reemerge.

In a nineteenth-century go-round over creation, Tennyson wrote "The Higher Pantheism," and had the poem read at the Metaphysical Society. By "higher" he meant panentheism, not ordinary pantheism. Everyone instantly recognizes this poem's most famous lines: "Speak to Him thou for He hears, and Spirit with Spirit can meet—Closer is He than breathing and nearer than hands and feet." Tennyson's focus is on the key question, "For is He not all but that which has power to feel 'I am I'?" Many lines of tortured dialectic follow, minus Tennyson's usual felicity of style.

Wicked Swinburne could not refrain from penning a parody in reply. And I cannot resist giving it here, as a final warning against the higher pantheism—and a reminder of how not to theorize.

> One, who is not, we see: but one, whom we see not, is:
>
> Surely this is not that: but that is assuredly this.
> What, and wherefore, and whence? for under is over and under:
> If thunder could be without lightning, lightning could be without thunder.
>
> Doubt is faith in the main: but faith, on the whole, is doubt:
> We cannot believe by proof: but could we believe without?

And so forth. □

OF SEVERAL MINDS John Garvey

DOUBLING THE WAGER

DOUBT, FAITH & RISK

Doubt and faith go together. This is said often, and too easily. It is true, in its way, but we console ourselves with this line and keep ourselves from being really challenged by genuine faith, or genuine doubt.

Doubt isn't a single or simple thing. From one point of view it is an intellectual discomfort, a sort of deliberate cramp in reasoning, a mental speed-bump. It is the necessary part of us that forever sings, "It ain't necessarily so." Isn't there *another* way to look at this? At the level of reasoning clearly about anything, deliberate and systematic doubting is essential.

But doubt is also an emotional response. Trust *too* much and you might be disappointed. Better to hedge your bets, as in Pascal's wager. Pascal's wager, you will recall, says that you can approach faith this way: If you refuse to accept Christianity,

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assuming it to be false, and you live as desires dictate, then you lose eternity if Christianity is true. If you accept Christianity, even if Christianity is false you will have given up comparatively little, but if Christianity is true you have gained eternal life. As a bet, it makes much more sense to accept Christianity.

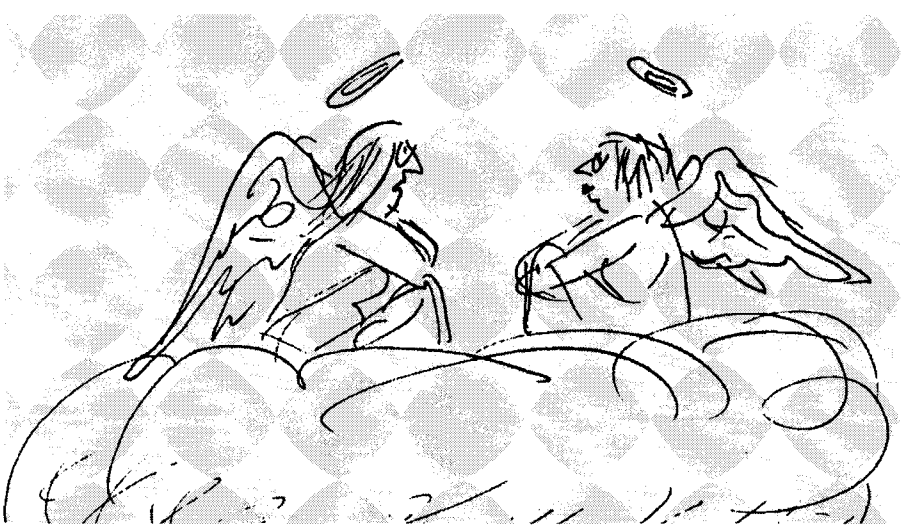
At one level this makes some intellectual sense, but I am not sure that what it encourages is anything like faith, at least not the faith Jesus talks about, although it may increase church attendance.

But aren't we all in some way living out Pascal's wager? Here I am not denying that doubt accompanies faith. However, if faith is the substance of things hoped for, we are ordinarily much too weak in our hoping. Paul speaks in Romans of Abraham, "hoping against hope" and this is the sort of hope and doubt that Christians all know, at crucial moments. Faith is not simple certitude—this would remove the freedom we must have; faith is a surrender and submission, not the response to something proven, like a problem in algebra. But hoping against hope implies a determined hoping. This is what we lack.

If I really hoped for, yearned for, the coming of Christ; if I truly believed that the good news of reconciliation is true; would I live the way I do? We live ethically, in a crude way, refraining from adultery and murder and intentional rudeness, as well we should. But much of our morality is a refraining from, a *not* doing, with an occasional decent deed, the coin in the beggar's cup. It is not ordinarily living in response to having been loved so much that the crucifixion was done out of love for me, in the hope (and the fearlessness that should accompany the hope) that the Resurrection is a *grounded* hope.

Real faith can't hedge bets. It means taking the chance that it is all meaningless, and still stepping off the edge into the dark, living as if the hope is grounded. You can't intellectually or emotionally know that you won't be wrong. But you can hope that on the last day it will be revealed that you were not, and you can risk living that way.

In a remarkable essay ("The Jonas Experience," in *Heaven in Ordinarie*, Templegate, 1979), Noel Dermot O'Donoghue quotes Saint Thérèse of Lisieux's autobiography. Thérèse experienced profound darkness during the last eighteen months of her life. She wrote, "I get tired of the darkness all around me, and I try to refresh my jaded spirits with the thoughts of that bright country where my hopes lie; and what happens? It is worse torment than ever; the darkness itself seems to borrow, from the sinners who live in it, the gift of speech. I hear its mocking accents: 'It's all a dream, this talk of a heavenly country, bathed in light, scented with delicious perfumes, and of a God who made it all, who is to be your possession in eternity! You really believe, do you, that the mist which hangs about you will clear away later on? All right, all right, go on longing for death! But death will make nonsense of your hopes; it will only mean a night darker than ever, the night of mere nonexistence.'"



"As a former lifelong atheist, I feel pretty damn silly!"

At the end, Thérèse found peace and joy, but not without the cost of the terrible burden she described in her autobiography, the enduring of serious doubt, doubt not as an intellectual exercise but as the consequence of serious hope. It may well be that Thérèse was a victim of depression, but in a sense this is beside the point, because genuine doubt of the sort that accompanies every believer is a consequence of serious hope, and does not need to be courted—it will be there. Here is Abraham's hope against hope.

Think of what we claim to believe. We believe that a God who created an immense universe from nothing loves us to the point of death, that death is not what we are called to, that we are meant to rise as the incarnate God did. To live as if this were true, to hope deeply that it is so, will lead us to doubt, and the more total and intense our hope, the more powerful our doubts will be. We look for the kingdom to come, but the agnostic in all of us suggests that this desire for completeness could be a neuronic trick. The desire for completeness is no proof that the completeness exists, but could be an evolutionary carrot and stick....

There is no proof. There are clues, in both directions, but no proofs. So faith is not a question simply of adding up the possibilities and risks and taking the lesser risk. As Thérèse's example makes clear, there is a great emotional risk in believing, and in acting as if the belief were true; and (*contra* Pascal's wager) belief is not the lesser risk, if it is lived. Although it is true that many saints speak of an assurance and confidence that come with great faith, this is a gift—it isn't guaranteed that we will not face Thérèse's darkness.

Living as if what we say we believe were true would mean living with a fearlessness which we usually lack. We live as if death will cancel us completely, in the sense that our fear of death drives us in many directions: to shore up our egos, to hoard against disease and starvation, to wall off those who remind us of our limitation and mortality—the old, the mad, and the ill. The greater risk is not to live this way, but to live as if we are called to rise from the dead, hoping that on the last day it will be revealed that we were not crazy. □

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1995 GRAYMOOR PRIZE WINNER

When a Christian Chants the Qur'an

GEORGE DARDESS

When Dr. Muhammad Shafiq, imam of Rochester's Islamic Center, entered the center's main prayer area (the *masjid* or mosque), I was chanting the Qur'an with my teacher Siddiq Abdul Hakkim. The two of us were sitting on the carpet near the back wall. Dr. Shafiq came over and said something that startled, even alarmed me. He invited me to join the prayer line with the other men at *salat*, the prayer performed daily at five prescribed times.

Why was I startled? Because as a Roman Catholic Christian, I had somehow assumed that my taking part in *salat* was off limits to me in the same way as Communion in my church would be off limits to Dr. Shafiq. Didn't every religion have its boundaries beyond which outsiders might not pass? Yet here was the leader of a Muslim congregation inviting me, a Catholic, over that boundary, and doing so in the gentlest way possible, as if the invitation, from his point of view, involved no boundary violation whatsoever. Where I saw a wall, Dr. Shafiq saw an open path leading directly to the front of the *masjid*.

Later on I asked Dr. Shafiq what he'd had in mind when he made the invitation. His answer—which I'll give in due course—didn't surprise me. From the start, I understood him better than I understood myself. I knew right away, for example, that my alarm had nothing to do with an effort on Dr. Shafiq's part to convert me to Islam. I had known him for almost two years, ever since my first coming to the center to take his course in Arabic. I'd been moved to do so by my dismay at my ignorance of Islam, an ignorance which had forced me to rely on the mass media's distorted accounts during events like the Salmon Rushdie controversy and the Persian Gulf War. After the course, I asked Dr. Shafiq if I might study the Qur'an. For it was now clear to me, as I had often been told, that without such study I wouldn't have a way of knowing Islam with any degree of intimacy. At this point Dr. Shafiq arranged for me to take lessons from Siddiq. Meanwhile, our relationship grew closer. Dr. Shafiq gave me good counsel during an illness in my family. I brought my high school English classes to visit the *masjid* during Friday prayers. A year ago, Dr. Shafiq invited me to speak at the center to Muslim teen-agers about the meaning of Christmas from a Christian perspective. He has asked me on occasion to edit his writings on Islam. In short, it is a relationship based on mutual trust and personal liking. He has been happy to see my degree of commitment to Christianity and has never sought to challenge that commitment or dissuade me from it. I don't say he wouldn't be happier still to see me become a Muslim, but, as the Qur'an says, "let there be no compulsion in religion"—a verse Dr. Shafiq quoted for me early in our friendship. One's way of worshiping God must be freely chosen or else it is no meaningful choice at all.

So if I ask again why I was so alarmed at his invitation, I'm forced to look inside myself for an answer. Some of this answer lies, as I have said, in my uncertainty about what is allowable to outsiders, and specifically to Christians, in the practice of Islam. But most of the answer lies at a deeper level, and so is harder to get at: in my own attraction to Islam. What began for me out of a sense of civic and intellectual responsibility—as a desire to cut through my ignorance of a religion practiced by a good proportion of the earth's population, a religion often misrepresented in the Western press—had become a passion. For how else than as the result of a passion could I account for the fact that I was returning to the *masjid* week after week to study the Qur'an with Siddiq and with my other brother in Islam, Navid Aslam? Why was I including within my daily Christian prayers others I'd learned at the *masjid*—for example, the *Fatiha*, the opening chapter of the Qur'an, which stands in approximately the same relation to Muslims as the Lord's

GEORGE DARDESS *teaches English at Allendale Columbia School in Rochester, New York, and has just co-edited an anthology of world poetry inspired by the Gospels, to be published by Oxford University Press.*

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Prayer does to Christians? And didn't my alarm at Dr. Shafiq's invitation indicate that my attachment to my study had become stronger than I was aware of? Didn't my alarm really signify my sudden awareness, not of a boundary in front of me, but of one behind me, one I had crossed already without knowing it?

But what was this boundary? And where exactly was I now? And in general, how far can I or any Christian go in following an attraction to Islam?

First things first! I cannot answer these more general questions without returning to my own uncertain position at the moment of Dr. Shafiq's invitation. In moving along the path toward—into?—Islam, I knew I was following a strong attraction. But precisely to what?

To people, primarily—to Dr. Shafiq and Siddiq and everyone else I had met at the center. I would not have proceeded down the path opened for me there unless I had felt welcomed at every step.

Yet surmounting these strong attractions to people—surmounting but supported by them, and unimaginable to me without them—is my attraction to the Qur'an, and particularly to its voice. I was slow to hear that voice because of the inevitable difficulties any Westerner has with Arabic's alphabet, grammar, and, above all, with its vocalization. Arabic's various throat, velar (middle of the palate), and nasal intonations are ones we don't make unless we are choking or clearing our throat and sinuses. Gradually, however, my body and my understanding accommodated themselves to the language's demands. And then, last summer, came an event I count as a special blessing. I was able to take lessons in Qur'anic *tajwid* or chanting with Qari Muhammad Khursheed Ali. Qari Muhammad (*qari* means "reciter") is the *mu'adhan* or *muezzin*, the one who calls the faithful to prayer, at the Faisal Masjid in Islamabad, Pakistan. His chanting of the Qur'an's verses is treasured throughout Pakistan. Very fortunately for me and others at the center, Qari Muhammad was able to come to Rochester for a few weeks to teach *tajwid* to American Muslims. Such instruction is not an "extra." The Qur'an—which means "recitation"—is meant to be heard aloud. The Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessing be upon him) delivered the verses orally as he heard them from the angel Jibreel (Gabriel), who was himself reciting the very words of Allah. Many *hadith* (traditional stories about the Prophet's sayings and actions) establish the spirit in which one is to vocalize the Qur'an's verses; other traditions not only set down technical rules for pronunciation and rhythm but also indicate where and how far one may extemporize, especially in the changing of pitch and the free shaping of lengthened vowels. A *qari* like Muhammad Khursheed Ali studies and follows such prescriptions carefully, finding in them the source of a centuries-old discipline and of a constantly renewed freshness. The result is that when one hears the Qur'an chanted by a good *qari*, one is hearing it reembodied, as if the Prophet's voice were revived in the voice of the chanter.

To hear this voice—and not only to hear it but to learn to embody it in oneself through *tajwid*—is to experience a beauty that stretches the heart. It is an invigoration of the mind and body, as if one stood, at each moment of vocalization, at the edge of all time and space, themselves merely the Creator's doorstep. No matter that after attempting to follow Qari Muhammad through a verse phrase by phrase, my sinuses ached, my nose became runny, my breath became short. These are happy birth pangs as a new creature enters what the Qur'an calls, in one of its most memorable verses, the "light of lights."

But how new is this "new creature," as I call myself? What exactly is different about the relationship I hope I have with God as a result of this transformation by the Qur'an's voice?

For me this is the key question, one whose answer I must approach delicately.

I spoke earlier of a tradition of recitation. Each chanter chants the same text chanted by every other chanter through the ages, but the chant takes form in each throat differently. The laws of *tajwid* allow, as I have said, for certain freedoms of expression. Such freedoms are themselves rooted in each chanter's individual gifts, musical and spiritual, as they manifest themselves at the moment of utterance. In this sense, recitation of the Qur'an is a continuous prayer, an audible sign of the inner disposition or Islam, submission, of the chanter. (The word Muslim means, "one who submits.") It is not a mere musical performance that Qari Muhammad gives, or that his student gives in imitation of him, but the evidence of a sincere longing for what the voice promises, again and again, in verse after verse: reward. Reward is the Garden, the land of delight and fulfillment after death where the only conversation is the word *salam*, peace, the fruit and climax of all voices raised in Qur'anic prayer.

But a strong taste of that peace is realized here on earth when one finds echoing in one's own body and soul, despite their imperfections, the Qur'an's true and original voice, God's own. This voice, mediated from a great distance above and behind one, through lines of transmission from Allah to Jibreel to the Prophet (peace and blessing be upon him) to *qaris* throughout the ages, is nevertheless disconcertingly or perhaps reassuringly near—"closer than their jugular vein," as one Qur'anic verse puts it. It is the voice, the message, the tone conveyed by the Hebrew prophets—overwhelming, magisterial, commanding, glorious, and so on and on, in adjectives derived from our experience of anyone who has ever spoken to us with true authority. And because it speaks with authority, it is not a bullying voice. Its power is not flaunted. It simply soars out high above us without interruption from the beginning of the Qur'an to the end, effortless and unhurried, even in modulations of tone from the joyful to the grim to the ironic to the reassuring. Yet without sacrificing its grandeur it seems to swoop low as well, to

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listen closely to our own inner voices, including the secret conniving voice in which we resist or try to ignore this penetration. The Qur'anic voice speaks often of our not listening to it, and records with short, devastating strokes the consequences of this indifference: the turbulence of heart, the violence of behavior, and the terrible end in the fire of final judgment. The effect, however, is not to frighten but to warn. We are not helpless in meeting the voice's challenge. We possess the strength to listen, and God— "*ar-Rahman ar-Rahim*" (the beneficent, the merciful)—never tires of trying to catch our ear and enter it.

My understanding is that being Muslim means just this, allowing the voice of the Qur'an, God's voice, to penetrate one's heart, with the result that one's behavior radically changes. The Qur'an's ethical dimension is rooted in this joyful submission. One simply cannot afterward, for example—in keeping with behavior the Qur'an most frequently condemns—neglect the poor, play the hypocrite, or set oneself (or anyone or anything else) up as an idol. Such behavior is not simply proscribed; it is impossible in the creature one is invited to become.

But what of myself as a Catholic Christian, coming to the Qur'an not from discontent or atheism but from a kindred belief in God's might and from a kindred ethical orientation? Could my experience of the Qur'an be said to have changed me in any way? If so, am I less of a Christian than I once was, as I become more of a Muslim? Or could the opposite be true, that I am more of a Christian as a result? What would "more of a Christian" in this sense mean?

Whatever the ambiguities of my position in the *masjid*, whatever my doubts about the degree to which I may take part

William Pitt Root

Courage: Revising the Text

It wasn't uncommon for us kids to be taught that courage
was bright and clean, reliable as daylight. Maybe
it wore a cape no shame can stain, maybe it
faced danger with a bulletproof grin or
wielded a bigger gun than the other guys,
eyes clear as the thoughtless sky.
And only losers
hunched in ash-heaps smoldering and rank,
fingering the octaves of their losses
in tatters of regret at twilight.

And so by the time we'd sprouted beards or breasts
and, at an hour not on our childhood clocks,
nuzzled the one with the other a time or two,
we knew ourselves for the cowards we were becoming,
and geared for a long haul cobbled with the boulders
of loss and pebbles of minor compensation,
no longer searching our mirrors for heroes.

But years require revisions in the heart's first text
now don't they, so we recast the characters and plot
not as we imagined them but as they've come to be.
Just now I think of Smilovic, the Croat cellist,
refugee among refugees in a cave above Sarajevo,
bumming smokes and brandy shamelessly all afternoon
from his NPR interviewer, and how, at twilight,
seated among dozens of strangers
he shifts, taking up his bow to perform
in that darkness which is history and fear,
how his sweetly drawn music manifests an order
resonant with beauty, yes, but nuanced, too,
with memories barbed by hope and all the anguish
of an audience geared hard to survival now,
scarred by murder, rape, and the forced witness
of degradation no heart withstands unbroken.

As I listen I am hushed by hard news
of this one's fate, by the image of him
sitting on the heaped ashes of a library
playing at first alone and for himself
so that the enemy would know the spirit
of a people lives, and is not silenced
—not by flame, bomb, bullet, or
brutality that seems to know no end;
alone he sat there calling forth
music and the crowd that gathered
listened as he played until at last
they sang, giving ashen silence a new name
that cannot be translated without flame.

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in the practice of this religion to which I have been drawn, I do find myself "more of a Christian" as a result of my experience—meaning that I am more joyfully and wonderingly a Christian than before.

This is so because the Qur'an has enlarged my sense of the Word of God.

How? To start with John's Gospel, Jesus is the "Word made flesh." He is the creative power of the Father come down from heaven to share fully in our humanity and to sacrifice himself for that humanity on the cross. That sacrifice, for a Christian, is not a bitter but a joyous event since it leads to resurrection. Our fallen humanity is transformed by Christ's saving action, a transformation that begins here on earth in our celebrations of Communion and which is perfected after death in heaven, when our union with Christ becomes complete.

The Word of God in the Qur'an is not transformative in the same way or to the same degree. Islam vigorously denies that human nature has fallen so low as to require God's salvific action. But in its power to enter the heart through the body and to lift both heart and body toward the light of God's mercy the Qur'anic Word is fruitfully close to the "Word made flesh." What the Qur'an "adds" for me—though, for God, there can be no question of a deficiency, of an adding or a subtracting—is a reinvigorated emphasis on the voice as the agent of embodiment. At Catholic Mass, the Word of God is made flesh both in the scriptural Word which our mouths proclaim and in the Eucharist which we consume. But though the Second Vatican Council declared the indivisibility of the Liturgy of the Word and of the Eucharist, we Catholics tend to tip this balance forward, emphasizing the Eucharist at the expense of the Word. The Eucharist then becomes the climax of a liturgical drama to which the Word is mere prelude. A prayerful recitation of the Qur'an, which requires that key ingredient of Muslim worship, *taqwa*, or absolute attentiveness to God's "signs," primarily to those given in the Qur'an itself, has led me to a more prayerful attention to the Christian Word at Mass and in private Bible reading. Word presence is real presence. The force of this truth, acknowledged by me before, but often lukewarmly, has been quickened by my Qur'anic chanting.

But can the Qur'an's voice lead me farther? Has it had only an oblique usefulness, in invigorating a somewhat dulled consciousness of the power of the spoken Word in my own religion? What of the message of that voice? How much of it can I absorb as my own without peril to my love of the risen Christ? I speak here of the level of importance the Qur'an assigns to Jesus. For while, as Geoffrey Parrinder convincingly demonstrates in his *Jesus in the Qur'an* (Oxford University Press, 1977), the Qur'an speaks of Jesus in terms surprisingly close to those used in the Gospels, he is mentioned in only 93 of the Qur'an's 6,226 verses. "He receives many honorable names but he is placed in the succession of the prophets, and teaching about the prophets is only one element in the Qur'an." Given the Qur'an's apparent minimizing of Jesus' role in God's plan for humankind, how far can I, or any Christian, go in my reverence for the Qur'an as God's Word? As attractive as the Qur'an may be, for all the reasons I have stated, doesn't its seeming indifference or blindness to Jesus' centrality divide it from me, force me always to hear it with a certain detachment? The Vatican II document *Lumen gentium* (16) may say that "the plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator. In the first place among these are the Moslems...," but nothing whatever is said or implied about the value or indeed the legitimacy of a Christian's worshiping with them. If, as almost all Christians, including myself, believe, there can be no salvation except through Christ, how can I chant the Qur'an sincerely without assuming—against all evidence—that the Qur'an is also, at some level, the language of the Gospels?

But for me—I cannot speak for all Christians—my love of Christ is not reducible to a series of dogmatic declarations. This love is a presence that accompanies me at every moment of my life, in moments of folly, weakness, and misery as well as in happier states. It is the atmosphere in which I "live and move and have my being." Put another way: the risen Christ is present to me, not only at Mass, but at every beat of my heart, in every circumstance. There is no limit to this penetration. Similarly with everyone else, including those who do not know him as risen Lord, or who do not know him at all. Yet my belief in his universality does not entitle me to make claims of superior knowledge. I could never confront Dr. Shafiq with the statement that, whatever he may think to the contrary, Jesus is with him. Not good manners but humility prohibits my doing so. What Saint Paul calls "the language of the cross" is not like the language we use with each other, where we deal with equals. This language bridges heaven and earth. We humans did not invent it. God purified and transformed an instrument of torture, the cross, as his vehicle for communicating with his creatures. In his unfathomable wisdom he performed a not dissimilar miracle with the language of an obscure Semitic people, the Arabs, purifying and transforming that language into a vehicle of his almost direct utterance. As I stand before the cross chanting the Qur'an, I do not find myself, God's creature, moved to argue about discrepancies, even ones as significant as those involving Jesus' true nature or importance. My conviction that the language of the Qur'an is also God's language overrides what would otherwise bring me to disagree with it as a mere human utterance. In such moments of enthusiasm—and they come often—I find nothing to hinder me from making the Muslim *shahada*, the credal statement of faith in one God and in Muhammad as his prophet.

For Dr. Shafiq too, God's *Tawhid* or Oneness resolves all tensions in belief. I mentioned earlier that I finally asked him, once

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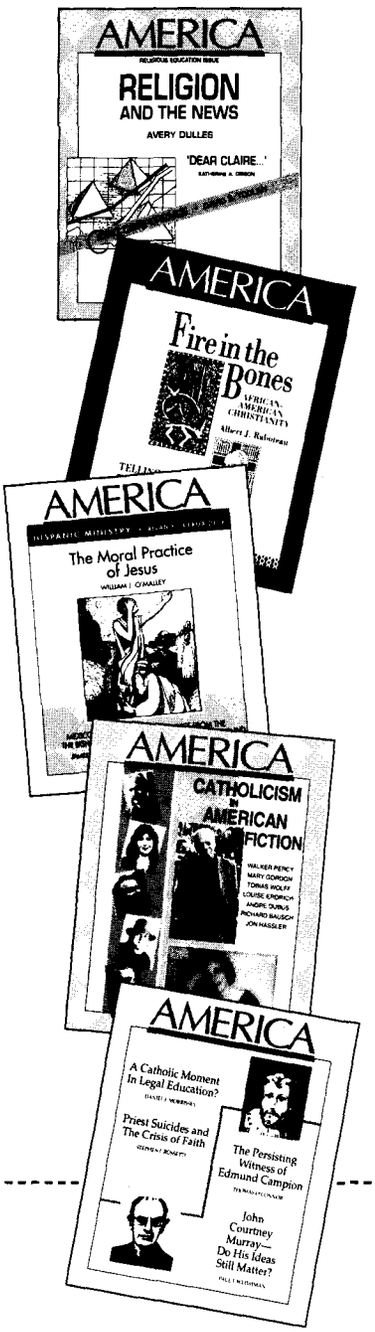

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I had gotten over my surprise, what he'd had in mind when he invited me to pray with the others at *salat*. His answer was, simply, that he already saw me as a Muslim in the truest sense, in that I believed in the one God. I myself might think I'm also something else, but in his view, Allah had brought me to Rochester's Islamic Center to become a part of the community of the monotheistic religions. "Islam and Christianity and Judaism are different only on cultural, not on spiritual levels. People don't see this larger picture because of a lack of knowledge," he said. As for my taking part in *salat*, Allah is the judge of my intentions, not people. But Dr. Shafiq thought *salat* would be good for me since it is a humbler form of prayer than the prayer of chanting the Qur'an. I did not press him on this point, but reflecting on it now, I think he meant to say that *salat*—whose formulas are largely composed of Qur'anic verses, especially those of the *fatiha*—enforces the Qur'an's egalitarianism. Qur'anic chant by itself might foster a certain intellectual and spiritual arrogance. *Salat* brings the believer side by side with every other person smitten by the voice of the Qur'an, not just with those adept at *tajwid*.

Smitten as I continue to be, however, I have not—yet—answered the *adhan*, or call to prayer. While I trust Dr. Shafiq and agree with his vision of the oneness of religion under one God, I nevertheless feel a restraint about taking a step which to me, rightly or wrongly, expresses a form of trespass. It isn't simply a fear of what my fellow Catholics would say of my doing so, let alone of what Muslims less enlightened than Dr. Shafiq might think to find me, a Christian, at their side during *salat*. It's that the communal action of prayer, as opposed to the more private version of it represented by chanting the Qur'an, assumes a full commitment to those with whom one prays. By "full commitment," I don't mean tithing only, or serving on committees, or regular participation at liturgies, though of course these things are part of what a full commitment means, and of what they mean to me in my service to my local parish and diocese. It means primarily a desire to make one's religion one's home. In marital terms, it means monogamy. Was it chance or God's will that I married the woman who is still and I hope will always be my wife? Given different circumstances, I might have married someone else—or no one. But the marriage I made, though a limitation in one sense, has also enabled me to be open to people in ways I doubt I could have managed otherwise. Similarly with my Catholicism. I was baptized as a Catholic Christian thirteen years ago. Given different circumstances, I might have become a Protestant or a Muslim—or remained agnostic. Yet my baptism and confirmation, from one point of view a deliberate narrowing of my options, gave me the security I hadn't possessed earlier, to open myself to God everywhere, since that is where my church told me to look for him. Without the security thus granted me, would I have approached the Islamic Center at all? And if I had managed to get so far, would I have been able to look at the Qur'an as anything but an important cultural text, the way the Bible itself is viewed in secular society?

Yet all such analogies, persuasive and binding on my behavior in the *masjid* as they seem, could evaporate instantaneously under the "light of lights." While I was flustered by Dr. Shafiq's invitation, I wasn't left speechless. What I said to him at the time in answer still makes sense to me—at least I have not been able to improve upon it, in all my replayings of the scene. I described my reluctance to take part in *salat* as a form of fasting, comparing it to my fast when, as a catechumen, I awaited baptism and confirmation as a Catholic Christian. As I watched at Mass the congregation file up to the altar to receive Communion, I felt keenly a hunger for the Eucharist. But I also felt joy for the hunger itself, as if it were important in God's plan that I experience fully the hunger before I knew its satisfaction. So in my reply to Dr. Shafiq, I spoke in similar terms of performing *salat*—that, in holding myself from performing it at present, I was putting myself in the position of knowing fully the extent and meaning of my desire.

Unlike my fast from the Eucharist, however, I undertake my fast from *salat* without the certainty that the fast will end. Yet it well might. I doubt I would find such suspense tolerable if I weren't sure in my heart that my love for God in Jesus Christ has brought me to it. When I mentioned earlier feeling "more wonderingly" a Christian than before coming to the Islamic Center, I was referring to my amazement (not untinged by humor) at the predicaments into which a commitment to Christ can lead one—even to the threshold of a different religion! When I mentioned feeling "more joyfully" so as well, I was referring to the new way given me, in the Qur'an, to embody the Word of God. During this growth, some categories have been broken. An old wineskin has begun to split. So be it. May all Christians know the complex delight granted me to know our God at the boundary of our practice and understanding. □

MEDIA

WHO'S ON FIRST

THE GREATEST ROCK BAND

Last October, VH 1, which is basically MTV for people with intelligences higher than that of a breath mint, ran a full day of clips—including live performances not previously shown and interviews with members of the group—by The Who, which just a while ago, after nearly thirty years, declared itself once and for all disbanded. The occasion was to celebrate and of course hype (it's still rock 'n' roll, folks) the release by MCA Records of a massive compilation—seventy-nine of their classic *and* their

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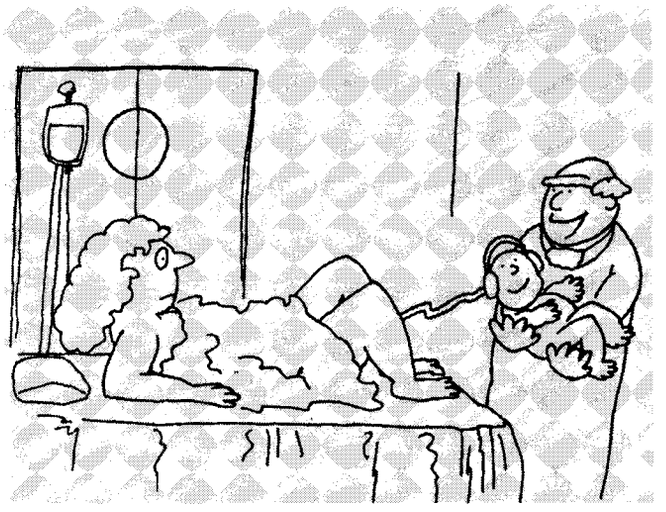
lesser-known recordings—"The Who: Thirty Years of Maximum R&B," which is as close to a Who "canon" as anything we shall get.

And I use that heavyweight word, "canon," deliberately. If it was impossible not to watch the marathon—my plan had been to finish the *Paradiso* that day, but *mi dispiace, Signor Alleghieri*—it was also both exhilarating and melancholy: but not (or not primarily) as an exercise in nostalgia for the sixties. What emerged from the VH 1 program, and more overwhelmingly from the MCA collection, is the simple fact that The Who is the best rock band in history, and that as such it incarnates all the energy, genius, and, yes, wit that characterize the best rock altogether.

I trust that at this late date we need not concern ourselves with schoolmarmish prissiness about "high" and "low" culture ("Come away, dears: that's a *bad* painting!"). "Rock 'n' roll" is a deliberately vulgar, marketing phrase: so were "jazz," "the movies," and "the comics": so, until the mid-nineteenth century, was "the novel." Such terms help distributors move their product and, I guess, give the worst sort of academics excuses for not paying attention, but they don't have a damned thing to do with what's actually *going on* in the art. The person, be it gentleman or lady, who has not pleasure in a good rock record, must be intolerably stupid. That last sentence isn't me, exactly: it's Jane Austen in *Northanger Abbey* (1818)—except she says "a good novel." Not the least of the brilliance of *Forrest Gump* was its soundtrack, reminding us that rock has been not only the psychic background radiation of our collective life since the fifties, but also that so much of it is so *good*. If you *have* to distinguish between listening to *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik* or Duke Ellington and listening to, say, Elvis or the early Beatles, then you don't know much about music in the first place; and I'm sure Miss (not Ms.) Austen would back me up on this.

Elvis and the early Beatles, in fact, help locate the special and rather wonderful position The Who holds in the history of the music. I simplify, but I do not distort. In 1954, with the early triumphs of Elvis, the inchoate, highly eclectic music which had already been named "rock 'n' roll" found its first—maybe still its dominant—shaman, and an identity which would be its glory and its curses. It would be the music of revolt, but revolt of a highly focused and highly marketable sort: an imitation or a *reenactment* of the African-American music of disenfranchisement, the blues; but a reenactment close enough to, *safe enough for,* the pop mainstream that it could be sold to young white audiences who wanted, essentially, to play at being outsiders. Like the poetry of the Beats, born about the same time, it was perfect fifties: user-friendly apocalypse, Nihilism Lite. (For example, an early hit had the innocuous title, "Dance with Me, Henry"; the original, recorded by a black group years before, was called, rather less innocuously, "Work with Me, Annie.")

By the early sixties, Elvis was in the Army, Buddy Holly was dead, Little Richard had got religion, and the music seemed doomed to terminal blandness. And then came the Beatles and with them the whole British Invasion. Complicating the already-



"Congratulations Mrs. Wilson, it's a DJ."

curious origins of rock, now we had dissatisfied British kids reenacting the musical alienation of American white kids who had reenacted...well, you get the point. It was the impetus for the second, and so far the last, truly creative period in rock. And when the Beatles made their first American tour in 1964—ten years after the Elvis-event—their opening act was a scruffy, little-known London band: The Who.

There were three great bands—if "great" means anything at all—to emerge from that time: the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, and The Who. The Who, appropriately, was the last to achieve eminence, since they were by far the smartest. The Beatles, even in their later, psychedelic "Sgt. Pepper" phase, were basically pure pop, *songwriters* whose best stuff ("Yesterday," say) is as haunting as Cole Porter or Harold Arlen. The Stones were and are a purist-funky blues band—"Jumping Jack Flash" may be the best white-boy blues of all time—but oddly limited by the ferocity of their own genius. The Who was a little of both and more than either.

They were Pete Townshend, writer and lead guitarist, a scarecrow whose angry intelligence was etched on his face and who bounded about the stage, as a friend of mine once said, like a kangaroo on speed; Roger Daltrey, a Nordic beefcake of a lead singer who twirled his mike in great arcs and had a voice like a thick steak; Keith Moon, surely the most brilliant drummer in all of rock, incandescent and manic and dead from the booze by the early eighties; and John Entwhistle, who stood perfectly still and expressionless—what else was left to do?—and whose bass, as Townshend said, sounded like a twin-engine Vickers directly overhead and fifty feet off the deck. In the early years, they were famous for demolishing their instruments at the end of each concert in ironic *Goetterdaemmerung*, by Wagner out of Warner Brothers. They were the most throat-clutching live act in the history of the music.

But their stunning performances were, really, only an extension of the high and acute self-consciousness of their songs. I've said that there is something inescapably *factitious* about rock-as-rebellion. But "factitious" doesn't—or doesn't have to—mean

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"false." The Who's music, from the beginning, was exuberant, driving, and profoundly aware of itself as artifice, as the *performance* of defiance. It was, much as I hate the term, *postmodern* rock.

Take their first big hit, "My Generation": "People try to put us down/Just because we get around/Things they do look awful cold/Hope I die before I get old." Anarchic? You bet. But the lyrics are so deliberately jejune; and as Daltrey sings them, impersonating the defiant young mod, he deliberately stammers over every initial consonant. So that "My G-g-generation" is at once wonderful, strong music, keen-teen rebellion, and a wry, sly undercutting of the idea of rebellion as market commodity. If Elvis had had that degree of irony about what he really represented, he'd probably be alive today.

And that degree of intelligence characterized all the group's best work: especially their 1968 masterwork, the "Rock Opera" *Tommy* (now a smash hit on Broadway and also a successful movie), which seemed destined to become the one authentic rock 'n' roll myth. It's the story of a traumatized, deaf, dumb, and blind boy who, miraculously, is a wizard at pinball ("Ain't got no distractions,/Can't hear no buzzers and bells"). He becomes a popular sensation, a popcult messiah, until he is cured by his disciples' adoration of him. And then when he tries to teach the faithful to follow his own strange path of self-discovery, they turn on him ("We forsake you/Gonna rape you/Let's forget you, better still"). All this on two LPs with, mind you, some of the best rock ever recorded.

I'm amazed that no one that I know of has realized that *Tommy* is a brilliant and bitter little parable about media stardom altogether. "Messiahship" in a culture of perfect information is inevitably debased by the very means of its promulgation: a gospel as best-seller is, as best-seller, no gospel at all. Herbert Marcuse, in *One-Dimensional Man* (1956), observed that you can't have a real underground under perfect capitalism, just because as soon as you foment your underground, it itself becomes part of the market economy ("Authentic Red Guard blue jeans now at Sears—as low as $14.95!"). The Who knew it, too—and made thirty years of righteous, smart music out of it.

And that's why the VH1 Who-fest was so moving and so melancholy. Since at least the early eighties, rock—no one with an ear can doubt it—has become progressively cynical, Vegas-style showbiz or, if not that, progressively self-destructive and self-loathing about its own popularity. (Kurt Cobain, the brilliant leader of the group Nirvana, killed himself because, he said, he "didn't believe in the music anymore"—pathetic and heartbreakingly understandable). But Townshend, Daltrey, Moon, and Entwhistle—and so many others—for a while at least created something of real value, something that was both commodity *and* art, and that managed to assert the value of artistic intelligence even in our ironic age. It is an extraordinary accomplishment. To understand The Who, I think, is to understand rock 'n' roll—and to understand something about the perils and chances of the imagination in the age of the infonet.

FRANK McCONNELL

STAGE

TWO FOOTES FORWARD

HORTON & HALLIE: SIGNATURE EVENTS

The Signature Theatre Company, which functions very far Off-Broadway in the very small Kampo Cultural Center, nonetheless thinks big, having devoted each of its first four seasons to the work of a single major playwright. Last season's honoree was Edward Albee, and this season's is Horton Foote, America's softest-spoken great dramatist. In *Commonweal* ("Horton Foote's Many Roads Home," February 26, 1988) I wrote about his lifelong meditation on what makes America succeed in spite of itself. The first two of the four plays that will constitute Foote's Signature season offer insight into both our success and the obstacles we impose upon ourselves, the false lights we follow in seeking that success.

The first, *Talking Pictures*, which ran from September 23 through October 23, 1994, is set, as are most of Foote's plays, in Harrison, Texas, the mythical seat of his personal Yoknapatawpha County. The work's moral center is Mrs. Jackson, whose intellectual horizons may run the gamut from A to not quite B, but whose soul is larger even than Texas. A devout Methodist, she does wonder whether Jesus could possibly have been a Baptist, but she can like and accept the Mexican Baptist boy who assures her that Jesus was, and be as much delighted as she is amazed that Genesis exists in Spanish. She takes the strictures of her Methodism seriously, but not so seriously that she cannot assure the daughter who sneaks out to a movie that she is not, therefore, on her way to Hell.

It is her motherliness which not only leads her to work for distant lepers, even in tandem with a Presbyterian, but far more to the point, it is her motherliness that makes her home the center of a community, a community that includes her tenant, Myra, a "grass widow" who supports herself and her son by playing the piano for the silent films at the local picture show. It includes Willis, very much in love with Myra, whose romance is stymied because he hasn't enough money to divorce the wife who deserted him five years before. It would include that wife, Gladys, and Myra's ex-husband, Gerard, were either of them capable of being part of a community. It reaches out to Gladys's hapless lover, Ashenback, pronounced with such hard and twangy "a's" that the audience is in no danger of thinking too much about Thomas Mann or Venice.

A community infused with warmth and open to the "other," but not one without problems—some of them serious. Myra is

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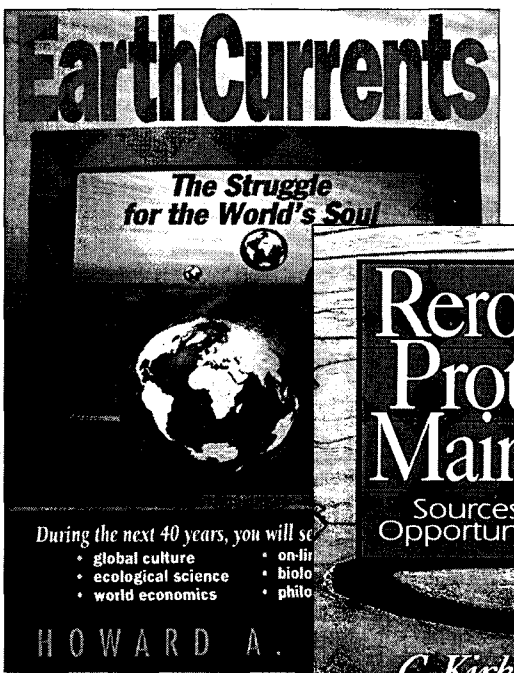

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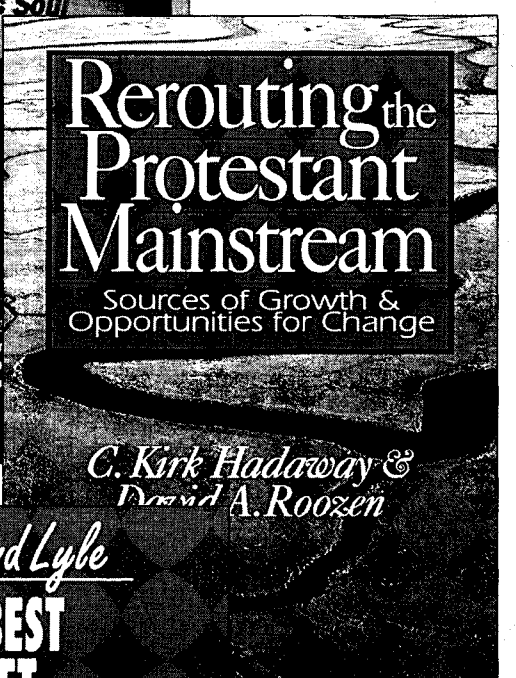

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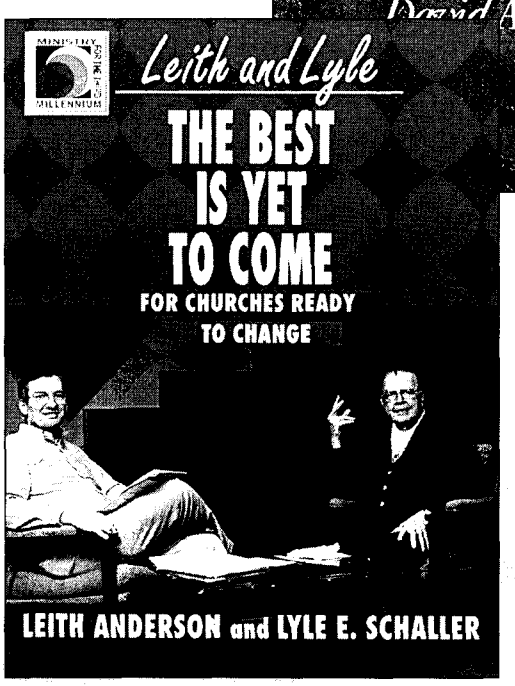
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Sarah Paulson, Alice McLane, and Samantha Reynolds in Horton Foote's Talking Pictures.

about to lose her job because talking pictures mean a pianist will be *de trop*, and her teen-aged son wants to live with his father's new family in a grand house in Houston with a swimming pool. Gladys turns up, ready, as is her nature, to disrupt. Katie Bell, the younger Jackson daughter, has a crush on Estaquio, that Baptist boy, a crush that seems doomed. Since his father cannot scare up a Spanish Baptist congregation in Harrison, both father and son will have to return to Mexico.

But the community works. The talkies may end Myra's career, but they, like the silents they replace, will open the world of those denizens of Harrison who can see beyond their noses. Myra's love for her son, Pete, and Willis's love for her, make clear to the boy their value as he watches his father's hollowness betray itself. And the community so extends itself to the audience that we sigh in pleasure touched with tears when Willis can at last hold Myra's hands because he is free to propose to her. And even as we laugh at Katie Bell and doubt that she will ever sing "Rock of Ages" on key, much less in good Spanish, we're sure that she will find her way, if not to Mexico, then to a place in a community where, her mother's daughter, she will be open and motherly, too.

Night Seasons, on stage from November 4 through December 4, 1994, has as *its* moral center Josie Weems. Not so much a mother as a matriarch, she presides over tragedy rather than comedy as she quite deliberately refuses to make a home. Habitually manipulative, Josie controls not only her husband and children, but her nieces and nephew, too. She values only money, partly as an end in itself and even more as a source of power. Allied with Thurman, a son who is indeed her son, she drives her nephew to suicide and condemns one of her nieces to sterile semidependency.

But the saddest victim of Josie's egotism is her daughter, Laura Lee, who wants a home. Using her "health" as a weapon, Josie traps her family for most of Laura Lee's youth in two rooms in a hotel and later in a small apartment. Laura Lee, pretty and popular, is cheated of her chance to marry, both by her family's machinations and her own inability to break free. She is cheated over and over again of the house that the money her father has set aside for her ought to have enabled her to own. Though what is generous in her never dies, its richest gestures come too late. She cannot save the suicide, and she dies as she is about to write the check that would counter her mother's stinginess to the family's life-long housekeeper, underpaid grossly even on Harrison's not overly bountiful terms.

Unlike the wholly realistic *Talking Pictures*, *Night Seasons* takes place on Josie's ninety-third birthday, and the past is revealed through flashbacks, some of which—particularly scenes which are clearly images in Josie's memory—involve the characters' younger selves, shown from behind a scrim, singing the old-fashioned songs that should betoken community. Laura Lee, by then dead, has a sad measure of revenge, for her mother is compelled to acknowledge that her daughter could barely stand to be near her. The play's final moments make manifest the utter emptiness of their lives when Thurman, childless partner in a marriage driven by hate, having achieved the presidency of the bank which is the family's source of power, an office which was to prove that he had "made something of himself," proves instead to be meaningless. And Josie contemplates with dread the three more years she must live if her sons are to escape inheritance taxes on the one bit of property Thurman somehow failed earlier to secure.

A word about the productions: For Foote, ensemble is all, and the Kampo's small stage and limited seating make it a fine place in which to experience his work. The audience becomes part of his world, as it should, for Foote's plays are very much about *us*. I found the casts of both plays well able to embody his vision, with only one exception. Elizabeth Stearns as Delia, Thurman's wife, was far too strident even for a shrew in Harrison. To single out far too few, in *Talking Pictures* Alice McLean as Mrs. Jackson succeeded in being as funny as she was earth-motherly, and Samantha Reynolds was wholly endearing as Katie Bell. In *Night Seasons*, Jean Stapleton made Josie Weems, despite her awfulness, human, sometimes touching, and sometimes quite funny. But it is Hallie Foote, as Myra in *Pictures* and Laura Lee in *Seasons*, who most profoundly actualizes her father's words. So perfect is her "down home" elegance in establishing his ambience and revealing his meaning that she is as much his collaborator as she is his star.

The season continues from January 27 through February 26, 1995, with *The Young Man from Atlanta* and concludes March 10 through April 9 with *Laura Dennis*. Make plans to go, and don't dawdle. Horton Foote's plays sell out fast.

MARIAN BURKHART

Marian Burkhart's most recent article in Commonweal *was "In the Paraclete I Trust," May 6, 1994.*

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Surprising, demanding, impressive

CROSSING THE THRESHOLD OF HOPE
Pope John Paul II
Edited by Vittorio Messori, translated from the Italian by Jenny and Martha McPhee
Alfred A. Knopf, $20, 244 pp.

Peter Steinfels

Millions of people scarcely able to understand this book will purchase and peruse it. Other millions who could appreciate and benefit from its insights will spurn it out of hand. The reason is the same in both cases: the author is the pope.

Behind the widespread interest and best-seller status of *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* is the belief that it will reveal a "real pope" behind the official Vicar of Christ, a down-home Karol Wotyla who will relax, invite us into his Vatican apartments, and tell us what he really believes, how he really prays, what really makes him tick, all in terms at once more intimate, more accessible, and yet more oracular than those of papal documents or Catholic theology generally.

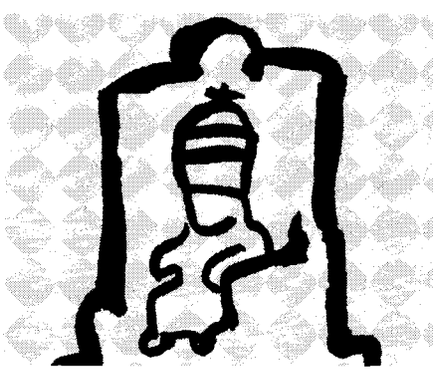
The book utterly defies these expectations. In a world of precooked, nearly predigested, thought, the pope's performance is uncompromising. Although he knowingly set out to write for masses of devout or curious readers, by page 22 he is discussing "cognitive realism." On that page and the three that follow, he cites Ludwig Wittgenstein, Aristotle, Plato, Kant, Aquinas, Paul Ricoeur, Emmanuel Levinas, Mircea Eliade, Martin Buber, and the Polish archbishop and thinker, Marian Jaworski, as well as the Gospel of John, the Book of Wisdom, and Saint Paul's Letters to the Romans and to the Ephesians.

My favorite passage of this sort occurs on page 51 where John Paul explains how Descartes "inaugurated the great anthropocentric shift in philosophy" and brought the world to "the threshold of modern immanentism and subjectivism":

> The author of *Meditationes de Prima Philosophia* with his ontological proofs, distanced us from the philosophy of existence, and also from the traditional approaches of Saint Thomas which lead to God who is "autonomous existence," *Ipsum esse subsistens*. By making subjective consciousness absolute, Descartes moves instead toward pure consciousness of the Absolute, which is pure thought.

There may be a snobbish, morally dubious glee in imagining the impact of that passage on the kind of reader who picks up the pope's book from the "inspiration" shelf at the airport bookstore, where it was grouped with *The Celestine Prophecy*, Robert Fulghum, and Marianne Williamson. Yet it is justiably satisfying that the current successor of Peter takes it for granted that serious answers to serious questions demand not just piety and good will but also knowledge and intellectual effort.

However, those prepared and willing to make such an effort may find other obstacles blocking their appreciation of John Paul's book. One is the temptation to read it not for itself but as a source of clues to his papacy, its successes or shortcomings.



Another is the obsequious manner in which Italian journalist Vittorio Messori frequently poses the questions that John Paul II answers in each of the thirty-five brief chapters that move from discussions of God's existence, the divinity of Jesus, and the problem of evil to non-Christian religions, contemporary youth, the fall of communism, immortality, human rights, women, and other topics.

Catholics honor and respect the pope primarily because of the office he holds, one firmly anchored in accountability to the church and its tradition. Only secondarily do Catholics focus on the pope's personal holiness, which may not equal that of the widow down the street (or, in some historical periods, the pickpocket down the street).

But Messori oils every difficult question with verbal prostrations that seem more suited to addressing an Eastern potentate or Hindu holy man. Messori's notion of "Vicar of Christ" seems closer to the popular Tibetan understanding of the Dalai Lama than to the Catholic theology of the Petrine ministry. In this respect, the conservative journalist is probably representative, as is the commercial success of this volume, of a reborn "pope cult" that flourished from Pius IX to Pius XII and that John XXIII and the Vatican Council had temporarily eclipsed.

John Paul, it should be added, adroitly parries much of what is most theologically offensive about Messori's abject and ingratiating exaltation of the papacy. He steers the journalist's evocation of papal titles back to a discussion of collegiality and ultimately of the calling of all baptized Christians.

The pope of this volume is not "inspirational," although at times his observations are inspiring. His voice is very much the one heard in his encyclicals. It is the voice of a high-strung Polish intellectual, abstract, romantic, steeped in history, tem-

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pered by modern tragedy. His view of Christianity is heroic and baroque, dwelling not on the "little way" but on the grandeur and misery of humanity, on the extremes of joy and suffering, which are never far apart from one another in his reflections.

This is not the voice of John XXIII; it lacks the peasant calm, the sweetness, the earthy, self-deprecating humor. But who is to say that this is not a voice at least equally valid for the century of gulags and genocide, of global communication and probes into space?

Obviously *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* is not to be read as a treatise. When John Paul II is asked, "Does God really exist?" he is not going to say no, nor is he going to close the question definitively in a few pages. This is a book to be read for insights, perspectives, connections, formulations that spark meditation and enrich our understanding.

There is no shortage of these. In reply to the question, "If God exists why is he hiding?" John Paul, after a typical circling of the issue by way of Descartes, Aquinas, Catherine of Siena, the Book of Proverbs, Ludwig Feuerbach, the Gospel of John, and First Corinthians, proposes that the real problem may not be the hiddenness but the visibility of God. In taking on humanity and revealing himself in Jesus, God

> could go no further. In a certain sense, God has gone too far! Didn't Christ perhaps become "a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles" (1 Cor. 1:23). Precisely because he called God his Father, because he revealed him so openly in himself, he could not but elicit the impression that it was too much....Man was no longer able to tolerate such closeness, and thus the protests began.

For me that does not close the discussion. Maybe the problem is that God is both too hidden and too visible, the divine revelation in Jesus too obscured by confusing and contradictory human witness in both the Scriptures and the historical church. But the pope's formulation altered my framework of thinking.

In some cases, the interplay of question and answer is fascinating in itself. In one of Messori's more challenging moments, with a minimum of groveling ("Taking advantage of the freedom you have granted me..."), the interviewer asks, "did a God who is a loving Father really need to sacrifice cruelly his own Son?"

John Paul opens his response with what looks like apologetic intellectualism at its worst: "Let's begin by looking at the history of European thought after Descartes." By the time the next question is posed, it seems that the pope, like a good politician, has completely evaded what has long haunted Jewish commentary on Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac as well as Christian soteriology.

Then, ten pages later, John Paul reintroduces the apparently evaded question himself in the context of the "great mystery of suffering." His brief answer will not settle doubts, but it demonstrates his unwillingness to set aside the embarrassing and intractable paradoxes of faith.

Likewise, John Paul's comments on other religions, including animism, are at once frank and generous, highlighting both what divides and unites. One wonders, of course, whether his treatment of Buddhism and Islam would be different if it were informed by the personal contacts and experience that warms his understanding of Judaism.

He affirms many of the themes of Vatican II, of *Gaudium et spes*, of the *Declaration on Religious Liberty*, of ecumenism, of the church as a reality greater than its visible structure and organization.

John Paul's thought, whatever one may think of it, has always been profoundly Christocentric, and so is his reading of Vatican II: "The council is far from proclaiming any kind of ecclesiocentrism. Its teaching is Christocentric in all of its aspects."

It is legitimate to ask how these views, expressed with passion, accord with the policies of John Paul's papacy. Historians may someday explore the oddity that a pope of romantic, heroic, Christocentric outlook should preside over the triumph of authoritarian, bureaucratic, and centralizing forces in the church.

But that would hardly be the greatest of ironies historians confront. Seldom in fact can one read recognized masterpieces of Christian thought without finding unpalatable opinions or recalling inconsistencies between the texts' profound sentiments and the more earthbound actions or circumstances that shadowed the lives of their authors.

It would be a shame if unhappiness with current Vatican actions, irritation at inflated claims of papal authority, suspicion of a gap between the pope's views and his policies, or simply impatience with the hoopla surrounding its publication kept readers from *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*. □

SOWELL ON ICE

RACE AND CULTURE
A World View
Thomas Sowell
Basic Books, $25, 331 pp.

Don Wycliff

At a professional meeting that I attended last spring, a consultant on "workforce diversity" gave a presentation that purported to explain by a kind of crudely simplified anthropology the differences in working "styles" of various broad groupings in the modern American labor force.

White males, for example, had been forced to wring a livelihood out of the cold, forbidding geography of Europe and to protect their hard-earned resources from members of other tribes intent on taking them. As a result, they had become cold, unemotional, and intensely competitive—attributes that characterized their working style in the modern corporate office.

Black males, by contrast, had gotten their livelihoods amid the warmth and relative abundance of Africa and, as a result, had developed a much more relaxed,

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less cutthroat approach to the business of getting a living—an approach that persists among them even in modern corporate circumstances.

There were similar explanations for the supposedly distinctive working styles of women, Asians, and other groups. And the thrust of the presentation was, in simple terms, that there is something of value in the style of each group and they all must learn to accommodate one another if America is to be productive and competitive in the modern global economy.

This example of dime-store anthropology came to mind when I read Thomas Sowell's assertion, in the preface of *Race and Culture*, that his book "challenges many dogmas of so-called 'social science.'" It may well be that, somewhere in the vastness of American academia, there are holdouts to Sowell's central notion: that culture matters, that some cultures have been more successful and effective economically than others, and that the people who evolved those cultures have more to teach the rest of us than others.

There may be holdouts to that idea, but I am hard-pressed to think of one that I have encountered in the workaday world in more than two decades as a journalist. The diversity consultant is far more typical.

Where Sowell parts company with the diversity consultant and others who might be called cultural levelers is in his willingness to name names and give grades. The fact is, he says, that Western European culture is where the action has been and is. It is the Western Europeans—and their cultural "offshoot" societies in America and, more recently, Japan—who earned the knowledge, created the technology, and fostered the attitudes that created our modern world culture, based on scientific empiricism. Everybody else is an also-ran, even if some others—the Chinese, for example—have had glory days in the past. And some, he suggests, like the Africans, have hardly even been in the game.

But Sowell has a polemical point in addition to an informational one. He is probably America's most famous black opponent of affirmative action, and *Race and Culture* really is an extended argument against affirmative action, largely on grounds that it is doomed to futility.

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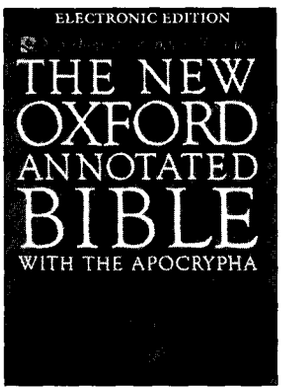

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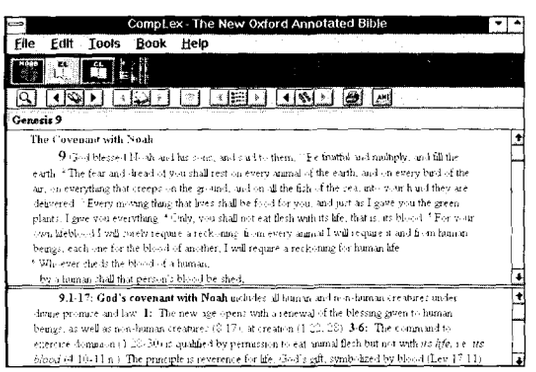

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There are no shortcuts to advancement, Sowell says, and no substitutes for the hard work of developing the skills and talents and attitudes—the "human capital"—that allow individuals and peoples to succeed. "Even if all races all over the globe have identical innate potential," he writes, "tangible economic and social results do not depend upon abstract potential, but on developed capabilities."

There is very little of deep interest in the early chapters of *Race and Culture* because, with a few minor exceptions, most of what is there is self-evident. To summarize: Every people has "its own particular set of skills for dealing with the economic and social necessities of life—and also its own particular set of values as to what are the higher and lower purposes of life."

"Much of the advancement of the human race has taken the form of...cross-cultural borrowings and influences," these being the result of migrations, conquests, and other such events which result in a shattering of "cultural insularity."

Where the argument gets interesting is where Sowell begins applying his economist's mind to various of the "dogmas of so-called social science," in chapters on race and economics, race and politics, race and intelligence, and race and slavery. He truly does mount a frontal challenge to many such dogmas, for example, to the notion that black housing "segregation" is always and everywhere the result of malign, invidiously biased behavior on the part of whites and, unlike the residential clustering of other ethnic groups, never the result of rational economic factors or even—God forbid—choice on the part of blacks.

Even as he makes sound arguments and scores legitimate points, however, Sowell occasionally lapses into tendentiousness. For example, in the course of arguing that discrimination is more a tendency of government than of the private marketplace, he observes: "One of the crucial areas of discrimination by government has been in the quantity and quality of education made available to different groups, for this can have lasting effects on their productivity and career potential in the private sector as well." (As one of several examples of this, he notes that in the antebellum American South it was a criminal offense to educate blacks, even at private expense.)

To most people this would suggest that, where governments have owned up to discrimination, some compensatory educational effort ought be made on behalf of that group or groups subjected to such a disability. Sowell, however, simply slides by that point and notes that "governmental discrimination in education may so handicap particular racial and ethnic groups as to make private discrimination difficult to detect or estimate, because groups end up with such different productivities as a result."

At some points, Sowell's polemical argument just breaks down completely. Such is the case when he addresses the issue of reparations for slavery.

He begins with an economist's quibble. "If the purpose of reparations is to share equitably the economic contributions of slavery to the present economy, then it would first be necessary to establish that there were in fact net benefits." Having previously asserted that there were no net benefits, however, Sowell can simply declare this point won for the antireparations side.

"A more plausible case for reparations," he acknowledges, "is as compensation for the suffering and degradations of millions of human beings during the centuries of slavery. Tempting as it may be to glide from uncompensated sufferings in the past to reparations to descendants in the present, the heritability of guilt is a principle without foundation and dangerously divisive in any society."

But who said anything about guilt, much less anything about inheriting it? The issue in the reparations debate is responsibility—the nation's responsibility to try, as best it can, to help descendants of slaves overcome the disabilities under which, plausibly, they labor as a result. The issue is not guilt; it is affirmative action.

It is here that Sowell becomes almost maddening. He speaks, for example, of the enduring "cultural headstart" enjoyed by "free people of color" and how it persists even to the present. He speaks of how cultural characteristics of peoples endure over centuries and through lengthy migrations.

But when it comes to disabilities of modern blacks that some people consider a "legacy of slavery," he is dismissive: "Whatever may be the real causes of the very different patterns among blacks in the world of today must be sought in the twentieth century, not in the era before emancipation." But he never convincingly explains why this is so.

The most useful part of *Race and Culture* may be Sowell's discussion of race and intelligence. Not because he refutes the Charles Murray-Richard Hernstein argument that blacks are inferior in IQ to whites and Asians. The best he can do in that regard is to chastise those who have attempted to suppress discussion of the issue and note the unintended result: "The taboo against discussing race and IQ...has had the perverse effect of freezing an existing majority of testing experts in favor of a belief that racial IQ differences are influenced by genetics. No belief can be refuted if it cannot be discussed."

Sowell's real contribution here is in suggesting that in the continuing nature-nurture debate, the "environment" that influences mental development needs to be more broadly conceived.

> Environment is not so much an answer as a gateway to further questions....In particular, "environment" cannot be confined to immediate surroundings, whether home, school, or neighborhood....To salvage the environmental theory of IQ differences would require a much broader conception of environment, including cultural orientations and values going far back into history.

That's an idea with real merit. Even here though, Sowell can't resist making his anti-affirmative argument: "But this broader conception of environment, reaching well beyond immediate circumstances, offers correspondingly less hope of substantial change by social engineering, such as remedial programs or the racial integration of schools."

That's Tom Sowell. Ever vigilant. □

REVIEWERS

PETER STEINFELS *is senior religion correspondent for the* New York Times.

DON WYCLIFF, *formerly a member of the* New York Times *editorial board, is editorial page editor of the* Chicago Tribune.

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Mission to the world

Lawrence S. Cunningham

I have always been interested in theories of Christian mission since such reflections, inevitably, bring to the fore fundamental theological questions: the nature of salvation; the relationship of Christian revelation to non-Christian religions; the uniqueness of Christ; etc. Timothy Yates's history of modern Christian mission theory gives ample scope to those and cognate issues as he sketches out the evolution of Christian (largely Protestant; Catholics do not even get consideration until he reaches the 1940s) theories about mission in this century. His story reaches back to just before the now famous Edinburgh Conference of 1910 (which would be so formative for the modern ecumenical movement) and forward to current debates about the uniqueness of Christ and contemporary approaches to understanding Christian faith *vis-à-vis* the world's religions.

Christian Mission in the Twentieth Century, *by Timothy Yates, Cambridge University Press, $59.95., 275 pp.*

That Christianity is a missionary religion is a truism. How it exercises its mission has always been debated. Is it to be straightforward proclamation? Should the strategy begin with building community ("church planting")? Should Christians satisfy themselves with being a witnessing presence? How should Christians act *vis-à-vis* other faith traditions? To what degree should (must) the faith be "inculturated"? Each question has triggered a theory and its own advocates.

In a sense all mission theory goes back to the most primitive form of the church as it debated its relationship to Judaism and, following that, the nexus between Christianity and its pagan surroundings. Many stretches of the Pauline literature as well as the Gospels can be understood as reflections on missiology.

Yates writes in a clear manner. His exposition of the various missiological tendencies, especially when they are antagonistic, is well done. In the 1930s and beyond, at least in Protestant circles, the influence of Karl Barth was at its most authoritative. Any theory that permitted "grace" to be found apart from Christian revelation was anathema. Barthian criticism allowed no sympathy for the Thomistic dictum that grace builds on nature (the "siren song of the old serpent," Barth said).

In fact, the history of missiology is a history of oscillation between those who preach the superiority and exclusiveness of Christianity and those who seek accommodation or convergence among the religions of the world. When Yates brings Roman Catholicism into focus there are the added elements of *Nostra aetate* from the Second Vatican Council, the insights of the liberation theologians, and the newer fields of comparative theology. Contemporary discussions about the "uniqueness of Christ" are fraught with missiological consequences.

What Yates does not talk about is a bit surprising. There is no discussion about the relationship of missions to colonialism. No attention is paid to the phenom-

LAWRENCE S. CUNNINGHAM *chairs the theology department at the University of Notre Dame.*

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enal growth of fundamentalist or charismatic churches in Central and Latin America, nor to the interesting phenomenon of receiving churches now becoming sending churches (our local diocese regularly brings in clergy from both Asia and Africa). Not as broadly sweeping as the late David Bosch's *Transforming Mission* (1991), reviewed in this column a few years ago, Yates's volume is a satisfactory if somewhat circumscribed survey of generally mainline Protestant efforts to give flesh to the gospel mandate to "teach all nations."

Yates's book has a somewhat detached and cerebral air to it. By contrast, many of the essays in Professor Poewe's collection derive from close observation of

Charismatic Christianity as a Global Culture, *edited by Karla Poewe, University of South Carolina Press, $34.95, 300 pp.*

one of the fastest growing movements in contemporary Christianity: the charismatic church(es). These essays tend to focus on specific and well-detailed observations, as is befitting a work done by anthropologists. Charismatic churches (of which the Pentecostal churches are a part) emphasize the *experience* of the Holy Spirit, the gifts of the Spirit (healing, tongues, etc.), and an elastic form of worship whose main focus is praise.

There is much to study about this branch of the Christian tradition: the rise of the "mega-church" phenomenon (the largest Christian church in the world is a 66,000-member congregation in Seoul, Korea); the transition of church membership from the working-class poor to middle-class churches in this country; the phenomenal spread of charismatic churches in Latin and Central America, Africa (with their syncretist variants), and Asia; the charismatic movements in the Catholic, Lutheran, Episcopalian, and Orthodox churches.

All these topics are taken up in this unfailingly interesting study. I was much taken, for instance, with the hypothesis that the success of the charismatic movement in Korea may be explained by seeing the preacher as a Christianized revivification of the traditional Korean shaman who was a healer and analyst of dreams. Furthermore, an essay on the use of history to give weight to the charismatic movement was a textbook case of searching the tradition to establish legitimate roots. One school sees the renewal of the Spirit as a simple reconstruction of the New Testament church while others attempt to identify a stream of Christianity (for example, from the Montanists through the Anabaptists, Pietists, etc.) that extends through history.

The contributors to Poewe's book are at pains both to explode some of the common misconceptions about the charismatic movement (for example, that its success in Central America is due mainly to American money) and to take the movement with more seriousness than it is normally accorded. That is not to say that the spirit of the book is uncritical or detached. In general, I found this a very helpful study (with an excellent bibliography) of an important Christian movement which I know mainly at a distance.

Peter Hodgson's book is far too complex to summarize fairly in this column. It is far easier to say what kind of book it is than to judge its merits on particular points. Hodgson has taught theology at Vanderbilt for twenty-five years. This work is a result of Hodgson's efforts to think theologically along with his students and in the company of his Vanderbilt

Winds of the Spirit: A Constructive Christian Theology, *by Peter C. Hodgson, Westminster/John Knox, $24.95., 421 pp.*

colleagues Sallie McFague and Edward Farley.

What kind of theology is this? It is, and I borrow this all from Hodgson's own descriptions, liberal, Protestant, constructive, and openly sympathetic to the Tillichian method of correlation (that is, of the Christian datum and human experience). It is also a theology organized around a trinitarian motif due, at least in part, to the author's long meditation on the Hegelian corpus. Finally, and largely deriving from the above contours, it is a "postmodern" theology. In essence, Hodgson feels most at home with contemporary concerns and less comfortable with the historical continuities of the theological tradition (the witness of patristics, the *regula fidei*, and the great medievals make only cameo appearances).

Powerfully influenced by pneumatology, Hodgson's view of God is a dynamic one and his picture of the church focuses on its role as a "transfigured mode of human community" founded on the life,

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death, and Resurrection of Christ, "created by the redemptive power of God as Spirit." The emphasis is on transformation, human bonding, and the liberating power of the gospel. His bass notes are emancipation, ecology, and dialogics, as befitting one who takes postmodern concerns with such seriousness.

There is much to admire in Hodgson's work and much that would require a more extended critique. Let me make one general criticism in the form of an observation.

If Hodgson's book has a deficiency it is in what he does not talk about. Gerald O'Collins has recently sketched out three strains in contemporary theology: the academic whose end is truth; the liberationist whose end is justice; and the contemplative whose end is adoration. Hodgson gives a fairly detailed synthetic accounting of the first two strains (this may satisfy his own understanding of theological "construction"), but is thunderingly silent about the third. He devotes only two paragraphs to worship and the sacramental or liturgical life of the church; never utters the word "prayer"; spends no time on preaching or evangelization. Such a slant may have been outside the scope of what he set out to do, but it is an odd lacuna for one who has spent his life in a divinity school preparing people for ministry.

In an earlier column I wrote appreciatively of Borg's *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time*. This new volume from the pen of a distinguished American scholar is basically a collection of essays which he wrote over the past decade or so. If there is a unifying theme, it is an *apologia* for the renewed interest in, and the labors of, those scholars who search through the sedimentary levels of the New Testament for the "historical" Jesus.

Jesus in Contemporary Scholarship, *by Marcus J. Borg, Trinity Press International, $16, 209 pp.*

Borg claims that this search (the third in this century) is new in that it is not driven by theological concerns; that it brings new disciplines (cultural anthropology, the social sciences, literary theory) to bear on the Gospels. The essays in this book sketch out some of the more recent reconstructions of the life and significance of Jesus, the new insights we get about Jesus as a result of these reconstructions, the work of the "Jesus Seminar" (those scholars who attempted a consensus, based on a vote, about which of the *logia* of Jesus are authentic), and the place of such work in the life of the church.

The results of such research, of course, made it to the front pages and at least one of the leading scholars in this enterprise (John Dominic Crossan) produced a best-selling book. However, a careful reading of Borg reveals how precarious is the foundation used to arrive at conclusions. Indeed, as Borg notes, the major players

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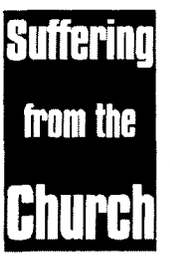

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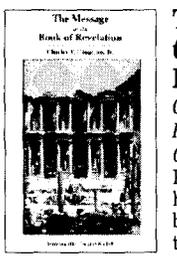

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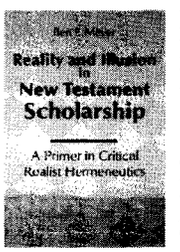

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have themselves formed no united consensus. E. P. Sanders argues for a profoundly Jewish picture of Jesus while Burton Mack minimizes his Jewishness in order to present a model of the "Cynic-sage." For Borg himself, Jesus becomes a "Jewish mystic" while for Richard Horsley he is a political/social revolutionary.

As one who, in company with theologians like David Tracy, tends to emphasize the postresurrection Jesus proclaimed as Christ, I read these other authors with more detached interest than firm conviction. Of the lot, Borg is one of my favorites since he still remembers that Jesus has something to do with the Christian church (in this he is similar to Elizabeth Schüssler-Fiorenza) and because he provides us with interesting and "strange" (in the nonpejorative sense of the term) approaches to Jesus, especially within the context of the trajectory of Wisdom.

In sum: Borg's inexpensive (but somewhat repetitive) collection of essays repays reading, both to get a sense of the *status questionis* of recent Jesus studies and for the leads he provides in his notes for further study. My bias is somewhat against this school of scholarship but, at the same time, I never fail to learn good things from it. For that reason, I am grateful to Borg and recommend his work.

Lathrop's focus is on the prayer of the Christian community. He rightly notes that the liturgy itself is primary theology and he devoutly wishes all Christians to be theologians in that sense. Secondary liturgical theology is critical reflection on the language, structure, and meaning of

Holy Things: A Liturgical Theology, *by Gordon W. Lathrop, Augsburg/Fortress, $27, 236 pp.*

that primary experience. When that reflection correlates with contemporary life it takes on a pastoral edge. Lathrop, accordingly, gives us a rich and satisfying study which first seeks out the pattern and structure of Christian worship and then examines the *ordo* of worship from within the experience of worship. The book ends with some trenchant pastoral reflections on the state of the liturgy today.

Written by someone who stands within the Lutheran confession, this is, nonetheless, a book solidly placed in the *catholic* tradition. As such it is a useful contribution to ecumenical theology. It is also a book written from the inside out in the sense that Lathrop attempts to make sense of the liturgy from his stance as a critically reflective believer.

Much of recent theology, both Catholic and Protestant, has begun from an analysis of the human condition in correlation with the Christian mystery (in obedience to Karl Rahner's idea that all theology begins in anthropology). Another strand of theology (one thinks of the current project of Josef von Beeck) begins from within the Christian community and inquires about its language, "grammar," structure, and ethos. Theology, of course, should not be a choice of either/or but of both/and.

Lathrop belongs to this latter tradition but with a much tighter focus on the community at prayer. Some argue that Lathrop's project (and that of others who write in his vein) is too "old-fashioned" and "conservative." My own feeling is that one must distinguish theology directed to the believing community from that directed to the world of academe or society as a whole. If one allows Lathrop's starting point then one must say, as I say, that this is a richly powerful exposition of the authentic meaning of what Christian worship means *au fond*. It is also a timely work. Without careful attention to what we signify as a gathered people our shriveling sense of faith may lead us to the woeful notion that "true religion is resident in disembodied ideas"—a notion, alas, one frequently encounters in much current academic theology.

Anthologies of theological/religious writing by women have appeared with some regularity over the past few years. Amy Ogden's now adds to that list. Dividing her subject into historical periods, Ogden rounds up some of the usual suspects (for example, the martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicity; Clare of Assisi; Julian of Norwich, etc.) as well as some writers who are not as well known (for example, the early twentieth-century convert from Hinduism, Pandita Ramabai, 1858-1922). It was also nice to discover a writer like Susanna Wesley (mother of nineteen children, including John and Charles) who, among other things, wrote a commentary on the Creed still well worth reading.

Since few of the selections are complete texts and because an individual might

In Her Words: Women's Writing in the History of Christian Thought, *edited by Amy Ogden, Abingdon, $18.95, 347 pp.*

cavil at the omissions (why, for example, no Gertrude of Helfta or Thérèse of Lisieux?) one might reasonably inquire to what use such an anthology might be put. One answer is that it could serve as a core text to tease an interested student into reading in more depth about a given person whose work is represented merely in the form of a brief selection. Another use would be to make known people who are extremely interesting but who have not been treated in any depth in accessible books. Let me cite two instances. Ogden gives us a few sonnets of the Renaissance writer, Vittoria Colonna. How I would love to have a full biographical study of this extraordinary woman who was an intimate friend of Michelangelo and a member of a "reforming" humanist salon in Renaissance Rome. Equally, it would be nice to have a full study of the ninth-century *Manual* of Dhuoda who is, as far as I know, the only woman known to have written a full-length book in the Carolingian period; to date we have to be satisfied with Dhouda's *Manual* in Latin (with a facing French translation) in the estimable series, *Sources Chrétiennes*.

At any rate, Ogden's anthology should be at least perused by those who wish to know about (or teach) the full Christian tradition in order to make present those women whose voices are only now getting the attention that they deserve. □

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CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 2)

Trosch, his murder-advocating priest, as reported in your engaging "Et cetera" feature [December 2, 1994]. He asks why such coverage. I ask, why not? This man is one of an elite elevated by traditional church practice and attitude to very high status. He's a priest forever and all that, lifted out of the common herd and established as something special. So it's big news when he preaches murder.

How big and for how long is a legitimate question. But Catholics can't emphasize the special character without recognizing the presumed horror involved in its violation. Oddly, secular media typically buy into traditional Catholicism and in the process reflect bona fide Catholic revulsion better than archbishops, who are less easily scandalized. JIM BOWMAN

We need these nuances

Queens, N.Y.

To the Editors: Margaret O'Brien Steinfels's article on "Dissent & Communion" [November 18, 1994], in its sobering clarity and fruitful reflection, belongs alongside Chesterton's paradoxes and is worthy of Newman's insights on the development of doctrine. It demonstrates how, as traditional Catholics, liberal or conservative, we are not radicals or fundamentalists.

Permit me, however, to express one criticism. The "paraphernalia" such as probabilism, ordinary magisterium, and "all the other categories....used to identify the settled or unsettled state of the church's mind" should not be dismissed but explained in modern terms so that the development of doctrine can be understood and the place of dialogue and dialectic honored.

An example is *Humanae vitae*. Paul VI made clear that its anticontraceptive teaching was not irreformable teaching. That was a great step forward, as was the action of various bishops' conferences that counseled continuing reception of the Eucharist by couples practicing contraception in good faith, thereby making clear that the liceity of artificial birth control was at least a safe probable opinion that could be tolerated by confessors and followed by lay Catholic couples. Liberals as well as conservatives seemed to miss the nuances of the encyclical, and both seemed guilty of a papal fundamentalism that is as debilitating as scriptural fundamentalism. FRANK C. ARRICALE

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Taking umbrage

KATHARINE BYRNE

Daisy and I were walking around the block one spring day when we saw Mrs. Wesley standing near her mailbox, riffling through the day's offerings, not happily. She pushed the contents into my hands: *The Christian Pewholder*, the telephone bill, and what looked like a couple of begging letters for worthy causes. "Today is our forty-seventh anniversary," she told me, "and there is not even one card here to congratulate us."

I found this unremarkable, but didn't say so. Daisy recognized the likelihood of a long pause in our progress, and found a place to lie down, under an old lilac bush. My neighbor plunged into her story.

"When Norbert and I got married we didn't have a fancy wedding. Both my sisters had real nice affairs, but when it was my turn, my father said, 'Enough. Two in one year is enough. I can't afford another one. You and Norbert will have to wait.' But we didn't want to. So we got married by the city clerk with a little gathering at the Elks' meeting hall. It wasn't fair. And that's why we never get any anniversary cards. Who would remember a wedding like that?"

Sadly she turned and walked up her front steps, the hurt in her heart deep and enduring. Would she spend the rest of their bright spring day brooding over a perceived wrong suffered so many years ago?

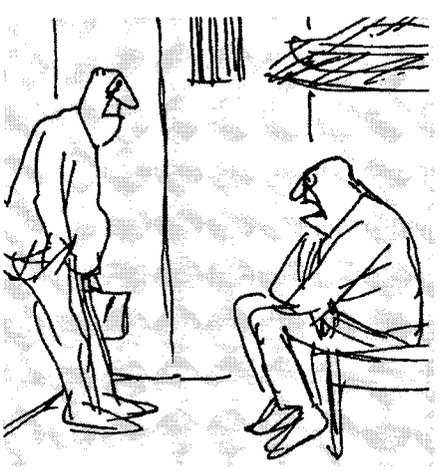
The compiled statutes of any state contain perhaps a dozen close-printed pages of laws and cases about trespassing on someone's property. These involve not only miscreant persons but grazing cattle and horses, as well as dogs unleashed and vicious; any of these "acting alone or in concert, engaged in tortious action." But there is another kind of trespassing that lives beyond the law books, in the world of umbrage. One is said to "take umbrage," and umbrage, once taken, is likely to be hung onto.

For in the world of umbrage-takers, you have trampled, not on my property, but on my feelings, my dignity, my sense of worth. And I am outraged. Like the umbrella it suggests, umbrage casts a shadow on the lives of those who are afflicted with this sense of "pique or resentment at some real or fancied slight or insult." Among them there is little likelihood of mitigation or forgiveness.

Shall we dismiss my old neighbor as just another old party who has little to think about and lots of time to think about it?

Perhaps. Yet flouted feelings are not confined to the elderly. Do you remember a scene from a movie called *Avalon*, the episode about the family dinner? Family celebrations are rich in possibilities for outrage. The movie is about a large and gregarious immigrant Jewish family whose custom it is to gather in great numbers for Thanksgiving Day. Each year a certain rich relative is the designated turkey carver. True, he is always late for dinner, but they always wait for him.

One year, however, as the gelatinous salads sag, the vegetables turn gray, the children begin to whine, someone says, "Let's eat!" And they do so.



"Sure, I had my day in court.
One *lousy day!*

When the late-arriving uncle appears, it is all over but the pumpkin pie. He is indignant and unforgiving; they have stepped on his place of honor, denigrated his position of authority. He walks out and stays away for many years.

Civic and religious organizations as well as families are likely settings for the taking of umbrage. There is the volunteer whose name is inadvertently left off a list of helpers; the woman whose contribution is somehow not recorded; the man whose name is mispronounced when his child walks across the auditorium stage on graduation day. "Wouldn't you think that after we've been living here for fourteen years with four kids in this school, they would find out how to pronounce "Papanastassiou"?

Around the first Sunday of January there occurs at the entrance of the church an annual happening fraught with possibilities for the taking of umbrage. The annual distribution of the local undertaker's calendars. A few sturdy ushers brace themselves, attempting to keep order and to uphold the rule, "only one to a family."

And now, the insistent exceptions. The woman who wants one for her mother-in-law "now living in Florida but she used to iron the altar linens." The man who wants an extra calendar for his office, reminding all who can hear him that his family has contributed to the support of this church for the past fifty years, and who, when his request is politely refused, huffs out vowing never to return to this place.

Because he knows something about the persistence of umbrage, an elderly usher, veteran of many years at his post, declares to one of his colleagues, "We may never see that one again until they wheel him in for his own funeral." □

Katharine Byrne writes from Chicago.

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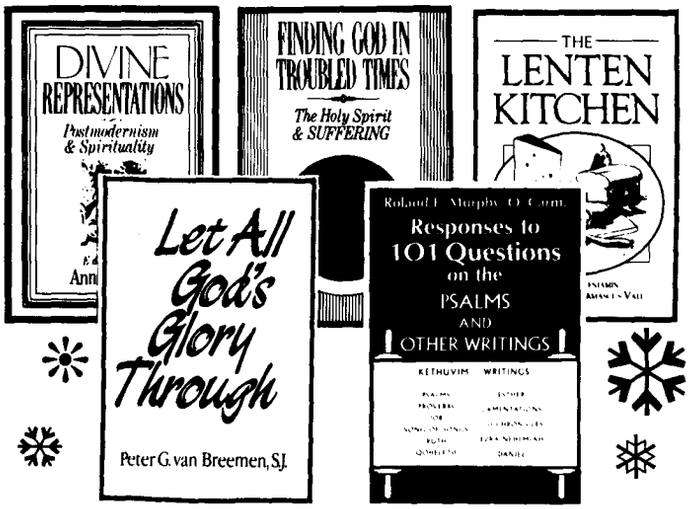
Winter Reading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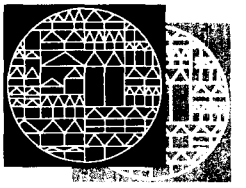

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